

VOLUME TWO



# Islam In Global History



From the Death of Prophet Muhammed  
to the First World War

NAZEER AHMED, Ph.D.

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Global History:

From the Death of Prophet Muhammed  
to the First World War

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# DEDICATION

Dedicated with Love

to

The Children of Tomorrow

# LAND POWERS OF ASIA

## *Summary*

*The aftermath of Timurid invasions gave birth to new coalitions, and new empires. In the Iranian highlands, the Safaviyya suf order established itself around the city of Tabriz, and under Ismail I, laid the foundation of the Safavid Empire. The Timurid prince Babur, displaced from Samarqand by the Uzbeks, moved first to Kabul and then to Delhi, and founded the Empire of the Great Moghuls. The Ottomans made their way back into Anatolia from their European strongholds. In 1453, they captured Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, renamed it Istanbul, and made it the capital of their fledgling empire. The Ottomans, the Safavids and the Great Moghuls dominated the Eurasian landmass for 300 years, and in 1680 controlled all the territories between Vienna and Calcutta. The politics and cultures of modern day Muslims are a direct legacy of these three empires.*



## **The Conquest of Constantinople**

The Battle of Ankara (1402) decimated Ottoman power in Anatolia. Bayazid I, who might very well have been remembered in history as the Napoleon of the era, was captured by Timur and died in captivity. The eruption of Timur had taken place just as Constantinople was negotiating a surrender of the city to Bayazid. The Battle of Ankara postponed the conquest of the Byzantine capital by more than fifty years.

It is a tribute to the resilience of the Turks that the Ottomans were the only ones who survived the Timurid onslaughts and went on to regain their former possessions. Even though the Ottomans had lost their territories in Anatolia, their European holdings were intact, and they were able to move back into Anatolia once the Tatar threat receded. The strong central administration staffed by loyal slaves, set up by Bayazid, survived him. These slaves, *ich oghlans* in Turkish, captured as young boys in eastern Europe during the Balkan campaigns, were brought to the Ottoman courts, trained and freed, eventually rising up to occupy important administrative and military positions. The janissars, elite military corps, were similarly constituted. The *ich oghlans* and the janissars remained loyal to the Ottomans and provided the nucleus for reconstruction, and the Turkish spirit de corps built around loyalty to the tribe, provided the cement for a larger communal enterprise once the threat of Timur receded.

After the Battle of Ankara, the Ottoman territories were divided among the surviving sons of Bayazid I. Sulaiman ruled from Erdirne in Europe, Mehmet from Amasya in eastern Anatolia, and Isa from Bursa near Constantinople. Of these, Erdirne had the advantage in that it lay in Europe, in territories that had not been ravaged by the Tatars. As a result, it was favored by the Turkish Sultans and served for a time as the Ottoman capital. There was the customary contest for power, but by 1411 Mehmet had rallied most of the Ottoman chiefs around him and had consolidated his hold on the empire. His son Murad II (1421-1451) continued the process of

recovery and consolidation. After a series of successful campaigns in Anatolia, he laid siege to Constantinople (1422). At this time, the Beys of Anatolia rebelled and installed Murad 's brother Mustafa as their leader. Murad lifted the siege of the capital and in a series of campaigns between 1422 and 1425 brought Izmir, Erkeshehir, Alashehir and Akshehir under his control. War broke out with Venice in 1423 over Solonica and lasted until 1440. Meanwhile, the Hungarians crossed the Danube in 1428 and invaded Serbia. The Sultan took the field and forced the Hungarian King Sigismund to retreat. In 1440 Murad made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Belgrade. Encouraged by the Ottoman retreat, the Hungarians crossed the Danube once again, occupied Sophia and advanced as far as the outskirts of Edirne. Murad met the invading armies and defeated them at the Battle of Izladi (1443). Thereafter, he signed a peace agreement with the Hungarians and the Venetians. Turning his attention to the east, he signed a similar peace agreement with the Prince of Karaman.

Having stabilized the Ottoman frontiers and concluding peace treaties with his enemies, Murad felt that his work was done. It was now time for him to retire and he stepped aside in favor of his son Mehmet II. The European powers misunderstood this as a sign of Ottoman weakness. Pope Nicholas V called for a Crusade, and a combined Hungarian-Walachian land force advanced towards Erdirne while the Venetians blockaded the sea.

At the counsel of his senior advisors, Mehmet II called on his father Murad to come back from retirement and reassume the command of the army. A reluctant Murad replied that Mehmet was now the

Sultan and it was his responsibility to rule.”If you are the Sultan”, wrote Mehmet II to his father, “it is your obligation to lead the armies. If I am the Sultan, I am ordering you to return and assume the leadership”. Murad returned, and under his command, the Turks inflicted a crushing defeat on the Latins at the Battle of Varna. This was a major milestone in history. The Battle of Varna in 1444 sealed the fate of Constantinople because all approaches to the capital were now blocked. The Hungarians again attempted to penetrate the Ottoman dominions in 1448 but that incursion was easily beaten back. Having accomplished his mission, Murad went back into retirement.

Mehmet II was a mighty conqueror in the tradition of the earliest Companions of the Prophet. While his vision embraced strategic goals, he

had also an inborn instinct for tactical moves. Trained from childhood in the battlefield under his father Sultan Murad, he was also imbued with a deep spirituality under the tutelage of Shaykh Aq Shamsuddin. The great sufi sage accompanied Mehmet II on his campaigns and provided him with the spiritual inspiration that alone enables men to perform superhuman deeds

The Ottoman Empire went through a rapid expansion under Mehmet II. Constantinople was a constant source of irritation to the Ottomans. Although it had lost all of its territories, the city still commanded great respect as the seat of the Byzantine Empire. On occasions, the Byzantine capital had given shelter to fleeing Ottoman princes while they were embroiled in wars of succession. It was also a beacon for Crusader armies hurling themselves at the Turks. Lastly, the Ottomans were concerned that the Byzantines might surrender the city to the Latins as they had done with the city of Solonika, and that would make the task of capturing the city immensely more difficult.

The Turks were restless, impelled by the spirit of ghazza (struggle in the way of God). Nonetheless, there were differences within the Turkish camp about the advisability of attacking Constantinople. Some of the generals were concerned that an attack on the city would bring a strong reaction from the western powers. Others held that the West would never agree upon a common course of action. The Byzantine Emperor had already sent out appeals for help to Venice and to the

Vatican. The Venetian navy was on the move. To the north, the Hungarians and the Wallachians were ready to join an anti-Turkish coalition. Time was of the essence.

Mehmet II made careful preparations. He ordered the construction of a strong castle overlooking the citadel of Constantinople. This imposing fort, which stands to this day, was erected in a record time of three months, and served both defensive and offensive purposes. It provided a staging area for the Turks and a platform for hurling projectiles. Mehmet enlisted the services of Byzantine craftsmen to cast brass cannon that could hurl large cannon balls across the Straits.

Mehmet II surrounded the city in the spring of 1453 and sent terms of surrender to the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI who rejected them. The great chain that blocked the entrance to the Straits frustrated repeated

Turkish attempts at a naval assault. Mehmet II ordered the Turkish galleys to be hauled by land from the southern entrance of the Straits to the northern entrance, so that the fort could be attacked from the rear. After accomplishing this monumental task in utmost secrecy, Mehmet II ordered a general assault on the city by land and by sea. The Byzantine defense was desperate just as the Turkish assault was determined and relentless. After repeated forays, Constantinople fell on the 29th of May 1453.

There was joy in the Islamic world while Europe mourned this loss. The year 1453 became a landmark in the histories of Europe and Asia alike. The Ottomans renamed the city Istanbul (Islambol), and made it the capital of their expanding empire. Mehmet's vision was to revive the city as the seat of a successor state to the Roman Empire, and to make it the focus of a universal Islamic state. To fulfill this vision, Mehmet took several concrete steps. First, he allowed those Greeks who had not resisted the Turkish advance to return and repossess their properties. Second, to further his goal of making Istanbul a universal, cosmopolitan city, Mehmet II invited the Greek Patriarch as well as the chief Jewish rabbi to stay in the capital. Third, the administration of the state was centralized and all of the Ottoman dominions in Europe were brought under the central rule of Istanbul.

The explosive growth of the Ottomans continued in all directions.

To the north, in a series of campaigns between 1454 and 1465, Mehmet beat back the Hungarians and firmly established Ottoman control over Serbia and Bosnia. Trebizond on the Black Sea was captured, and Morea followed suit. The Turkish navy crossed the Black Sea and brought southern Crimea under Ottoman rule (1475). The addition of the Crimean Tatars to the Empire brought a valuable source of men and material into the service of the Sultan.

Mehmet's conquests brought a new call for a Crusade by Pope Nicholas V. The Hungarians, Wallachians, and the Venetians answered the call and formed an alliance with the Albanians who were then in rebellion against the Ottomans. The war began in 1463 and lasted four years. The Crusaders captured Morea, and Istanbul was threatened. Mehmet built two fortresses, facing each other, in Gallipoli to block an enemy naval advance and to prevent an attack on Istanbul from the rear. A powerful Ottoman navy was built which beat back the Venetians and recaptured Morea. On land, the Ottoman cavalry fought its way up the Adriatic coast and approached the

outskirts of Venice. An alarmed Venice sued for peace, surrendered Morea to the Turks and agreed to an annual tribute of 10,000 gold coins.

The Ottoman borders to the east were far from quiet. There was friction with the Turkmen Aq Kuyunlu ruler Uzun Hassan over control of the province of Karaman. The Ottomans had annexed the province in 1468 but some of the Karaman princes had fled to Persia and had sought the protection of Uzun Hassan. The Vatican saw in this a golden opportunity to outflank the Ottomans. Ambassadors were exchanged between the Latins and Uzun Hassan and an alliance was concluded. In 1472 Uzun Hassan advanced into Anatolia at the head of over 30,000 cavalymen. Mehmet II, recognizing the grave danger from the east, marshaled the Ottoman forces numbering over 100,000, and in a pitched battle near Bashkent (1473) trounced Uzun Hassan. Beaten in battle, Uzun Hassan concluded a treaty with Mehmet and promised not to interfere in Anatolian politics. It was also during the struggle for Karaman that the Ottomans came face to face with the powerful Mamlukes of Egypt. The border areas between Anatolia and Persia would involve, in the coming decades, a three-way struggle between the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mamlukes.

Mehmet continued to reinforce his naval forces. In 1480, the Turks crossed the Adriatic and occupied several strong points in southern Italy including the city of Otranto (1480). The presence of the Turks so close to home struck panic in Rome and the Pope made preparations to flee to France. Mehmet's next target was the island of Rhodes, which was controlled by the Knights of St. John. These Knights were pirates who routinely attacked Turkish ships ferrying pilgrims from Anatolia, kidnapping and robbing them. In 1480, the Turkish general Ahmed Pasha drove out the Knights of St. John from the island. When Mehmet died in 1481, he had more than recovered what was lost at the Battle of Ankara (1402). He had extended the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire beyond those achieved by his grandfather Bayazid I. He had projected Turkish power into Italy and soundly trounced the Hungarians. Most important, he had conquered Istanbul, crown jewel of the Mediterranean and capital of the Byzantine Empire.

Several reasons may be offered for the explosive growth of the Ottoman Empire. In the pre-Ottoman era, feudalism was rampant in the Balkans. There was no central authority. The peasantry suffered under local fiefdoms.

Local lords and the church imposed exorbitant taxes and exacted forced labor. To the peasants, toiling under the yoke of the feudal lords, the Ottomans came as liberators.

The Ottomans instituted several reforms to change the feudal social structure that they had inherited. First, they abolished the fiefdoms and placed all rights to the land under state control. Taxation was fixed depending on the produce. Secondly, the Ottomans protected the religious rights of the conquered people. Under the milliyet system of administration, each religious group was given autonomy with respect to its personal laws. The Church was protected. Third, the conflict between the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches worked to the advantage of the Turks. The peasants were Eastern Orthodox, whereas the lords and noblemen were Roman Catholic. The peasants were much better off under the Turks than they were under the Latin lords and often cooperated with the Muslim Turks against the Latin Christians.

Many accepted Islam to escape the oppression of their former feudal masters. Fourth, the Ottoman conquests were not merely imperial expansions but a great migration of Turkish people. This migration had commenced in Central Asia in the 11th century under the Seljuks. Each Ottoman conquest was followed by a grand migration to the new territories. The ethnic and religious composition of the Balkans went through a transformation as the Turks migrated deeper into south central Europe. Each settled wave of settlers paved the way for the next one.

But the most important reason for the success of the Ottomans was the spirit of ghazza. Those who performed ghazza were known as ghazis. The ghazi vision was to establish a world order based on equity, justice, freedom of worship, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. The spirit of the ghazis permeated the Ottoman struggle since the early days of Uthmanali. It was this spirit that provided the explosive energy for the Ottomans. In its implementation, it demanded of the ghazis self-restraint, unceasing struggle, discipline, valor, sacrifice, mutual help and adherence to a strict code of honor. The ghazi was not to harm the civilian population but to protect it. The Ottomans jealously guarded this reputation as the ghazis of Islam and won the admiration of Muslims around the globe. Even Babur, the founder of the Moghul Empire in India, pays tribute to the “ghazis of Rum” in his autobiography, the Baburnameh.

The organization of the ghazis lent itself to a decentralized command structure, which allowed the Turks to take advantage of local conditions. The overall struggle was organized into marches. For instance, during the period of Bayazid I, in 1402, there were no less than four marches, each pushing the Ottoman advance in a different direction: the march of Dobruja directed at Wallachia; the march of Vidin directed at Hungary; the march of Uskup directed at Bosnia and Albania; and the march of Tirkkala directed at Morea and Greece. The Emperor considered himself to be a ghazi and was always in the front lines. Thus, the expansive spirit of a border state animated the Ottoman Empire. Once a forward area was subdued, it was populated by a fresh wave of Turks, and it, in turn, became a center for further expansion. In some ways, it resembled the expansion of American settler colonies in the American West in the 19th century. The leaders of the marches were rewarded with large estates in the conquered territories, which they governed as autonomous officials of the Ottoman state. Up until the time of Murad II, the marches were led by free wheeling Turkish chiefs. Murad II put his trusted soldiers from the palace guards in charge of the marches and brought the marches under centralized state control. In the 16th and 17th centuries, as defensive positions in central Europe hardened, it became more and more difficult to continue the marches. After the 16th century, the role of the ghazis changed, from conquest to providing advance support for the Turkish army by conducting forays ahead of the main armed forces, harassing the enemy, cutting its supply lines and gathering intelligence.

## Emergence of the Safavids

The origins of the Safavid dynasty in Persia must be sought in the folk Islam that developed in the immediate aftermath of the Mongol devastations and in the political convulsions in the border areas of Persia and Anatolia after the Timurid invasions. Between the year 1219 when Genghiz Khan's troops crossed the Amu Darya in Kazakhstan, and 1261 when the Mamlukes finally stopped the Mongol forces at Ayn Jalut, the central mass of Islam was obliterated. Central Asia, Persia, Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as parts of Syria and Pakistan lay in ruins. In some areas, as much as ninety percent of the population was killed. Major centers of learning like Bukhara, Samarqand, Herat, and Baghdad were razed to the ground. Libraries were burned, scholars butchered, monuments demolished, dams destroyed, and the general population was enslaved. To grasp the magnitude of the calamity from a global Islamic perspective, it must be recalled that this was the same period when the Christians captured much of Spain, including Seville and Cordoba.

Faced with this enormous calamity, Muslims turned to their own spiritual roots. Gone were the ulema who could discuss the fine details of theology or argue the relative merits of the various mazhabs. The Abbasid Caliphate, which had become an empty shell, disappeared. Faced with total obliteration, the schisms between the various sects and mazhabs were temporarily shelved. In the pre-Mongol period, Persia, Iraq and Syria had witnessed countless feuds among followers of the Shafi'i, Hanafi and Ithna Ashari schools of Fiqh. What emerged in place of a theological Islam dominated by the ulema was a folk Islam nurtured by the sufis.

Sufic Islam was different from pre-Mongol theological Islam in its emphasis on the spiritual content of faith as contrasted with its ritualistic content. The warriors of Central Asia had failed to prevent the triumph of the Mongols. The ulema, who depended on the warrior rulers for their survival, had been obliterated. A religious vacuum was thus created. Times were hard and it was not clear whether Islam itself would survive in Central Asia and Persia. The faithful therefore turned to the reservoir of their inner



souls. The sword of the Mongol could decapitate a ruler but it could not touch the spirit of a believer. The common folk, in search of leadership, gravitated to the sufi masters.

The sufic approach, from its very infancy, had stayed above the political infighting that has characterized Shi'a-Sunni relations since the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Sufi practices were an amalgam of Shi'a and Sunni practices. The sufis, always suspect in the eyes of the theological establishment, had to be circumspect in their practices. In their emphasis on the transmission of knowledge through a teacher (murshid, pir, qutub), the sufis were closer to the Shi'a approach. In their adherence to the Shariah, they were closer to the Sunni methodology. Furthermore, Ali ibn Abu Talib was accepted by most sufi orders as the patron-Imam and special honor was accorded to Ahl-al Bait (household of the Prophet).

Esoteric knowledge of God's presence through irfan (intuitive, immediate, personal knowledge of the Divine Presence) was emphasized as much as the exoteric knowledge of the Divine through adherence to Shariah. To escape persecution, elements of taqiyya (concealment of true religious faith from the enemy) were also accepted. Some tareeqas incorporated music and sama'a in their practices. It was this folk Islam, incorporating in it the spirituality of Islam, but with a lesser emphasis on its outward shell, that survived the Mongol age. And it was this sufic Islam that was introduced into Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and much of Africa. The Arab core of the Islamic world was less influenced by this approach because it escaped the Mongol devastations thanks to the victory of the Mamlukes at Ayn Jalut. Even to this day, in a melting pot such as America, one sees this difference in emphasis among Muslim groups. Those from the Arab world emphasize the Shariah and strict adherence to its rules, whereas those from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Indonesia, Malaysia and Africa emphasize its spiritual content.

It was this folk Islam, neither Shi'a nor Sunni, that was the preeminent religion in 13th and 14th century west central Asia. And it was from its womb that the Safavid, the Moghul and the Ottoman Empires emerged. The confluence of Shi'a-Sunni ideas in tasawwuf makes it easier for a determined organized group to swing the populace one way or the other. Thus it was that the Safavids found it easier to tilt to the Ithna Ashari Fiqh in Persia, whereas their cousins among the Great Moghuls of India and the

Ottomans tilted towards the Hanafi Fiqh. What was initially a tilt in a social political movement was hardened into bitter Shi'a-Sunni rivalry in later centuries as the Ottomans and the Safavids fought over the control of Azerbaijan and Iraq, while the Moghuls and the Safavids crossed swords over control of southern Afghanistan. Political and military ambitions were clothed in religious slogans and expressed in religious jargon, further widening a rift that runs through Islamic history like an earthquake fault. The Shi'a-Sunni differences were political, not religious, which were amplified by interested rulers and theologians.

It is noteworthy that the emergence of folk Islam sustained one of the greatest periods of creativity in Islamic literature, poetry, music, mathematics and art. It was during this period that the Farsi language attained its linguistic zenith and developed into the lingua franca in much of Asia. Turkish literature flourished and the Urdu language was born in India. Many of Timur's descendants, Shah Rukh, Abu Said, Ulugh Beg and Hussain Baiqara, were patrons of art and literature. Some of the greatest literary figures of this age were Hafiz of Shiraz (d. 1389, author of *Diwan e Hafiz*), Abu Ishaq Inju of Shiraz (d. 1355, author of *Muwaqqif*), Emir Khusro of Delhi (author of numerous ecstatic poems), Jalaluddin Rumi of Turkey (d. 1273, author of *Masnavi*); Abu Ishaq of Shiraz (d. 1424, author of *Kanz e Ishtiha*), Abdur Rahman Jami (d. 1492, author of *Nafhatul Uns*); Mir Ali Navai (d.1490, author of *Mahbul Qulub*); Nuruddin Ghazani of Samarqand (d. 1407, author of *Zafar Nama*); Shihabuddin Abdallah (d. 1430, author of *Majma e Tavarish*); and Zaheeruddin Babur, founder of the Moghul dynasty of India (d. 1528, author of *Babur Nama*).

The area around the Caspian Sea, from Tabriz to Jeelan, was a center for sufi activities. It was in this milieu that Shaykh Safiuddin Ishaq (1252-1334), after whom the Safavid dynasty is named, was born. Shaykh Safiuddin received his ijaza from Shaykh Tajuddin Jeelani, a member of the Qadariya order. Shaykh Jeelani saw in the young Safi a combination of sufic rectitude, political astuteness, and mundane practicality, and gave his daughter in marriage to him. Shaykh Safi established his own religious order in Ardabil, a city about 200 miles east of Tabriz. Those were unstable times, when the Il Khanid dynasty had ended and various Turkish tribes were jostling for political power. Under Shaykh Safiuddin, Ardabil became a refuge for many who were fleeing the tumult in the surrounding

countryside. Shaykh Safi's fame spread, bringing him the patronage of the courts and donations from the rich. The Shaykh used this wealth to provide relief to the poor and succor for the oppressed. The Safaviyya brotherhood grew and developed a widespread following among the Turks, Persians, Syrians, Iraqis and Kurds of Azerbaijan and eastern Anatolia. To this brotherhood, Shaykh Safi was the Pir and Murshad e Kamil (supreme spiritual leader) as well as its temporal ruler. The followers accorded the Murshad their unquestioned loyalty and total trust. The origins of the zeal with which the Safaviyya brotherhood followed Shah Ismail a hundred years later (circa 1500), is to be found in the discipline, comradeship, loyalty and organization that was established by Shaykh Safiuddin.

A great deal has been written by Safavid chroniclers to claim that Shaykh Safi was a Shi'a. This appears to be social history written in retrospect. It is more likely that Shaykh Safi was neither Shi'a nor Sunni but belonged to that universal folk Islam, based on tasawwuf, that had emerged in the post-Mongol period and had brought about an amalgam of Sunni and Shi'a elements. It was also claimed by the Safavids that Shaykh Safi was a Sayyid, a person in the lineage of Ali and Fatima. This claim, whether true or not, is relevant only to the extent that throughout Islamic history, kings and emperors have sought to establish the legitimacy of their rule by claiming to be descendants of the Prophet. Compare, for instance, the desire of Indonesian and Malaysian Sultans, during the 14th and 15th centuries, to marry their daughters to Sayyids from Arabia so as to establish the legitimacy of their rule. The Sayyids who seized power in Delhi following the withdrawal of Timur provide yet another example of this practice.

Into the lineage of Shaykh Safi was born Ismail I in 1487, claiming his descent from the family of Ali ibn Abu Talib and his spiritual legacy from Shaykh Safi. Ismail I was the founder of the Safavid dynasty of Persia, which lasted until 1736, and influenced cultural and political developments in much of Asia.

A second major element in the emergence of the Safavids was the migration of the Turkish tribes. We have observed earlier that the paramount religious-historical events of the last thousand years occurred towards the end of the first millennium, when the Germans were converted to Catholic Christianity (9th century), the Turks accepted Islam (8th and 9th centuries), and the Russians joined the Eastern Orthodox Church (10th and

11th centuries). The movement of Turkish tribes across Central Asia into Persia, Anatolia, India, Syria and Egypt had an impact on global history similar to that of Germanic movements in Europe. The Turks, a dynamic, resilient, restless people, moved in waves in search of pastures for their herds and room for their growing populations. The first wave, led by the tribe of Oghuz, crossed the Amu Darya in the 11th century and was responsible for the disintegration of the Ghaznavi Empire and the emergence of the Seljuk Empire. The Seljuks moved further west, established their capital at Konya in Turkey, and from there dominated much of Central and West Asia for more than a hundred years. It was the shield of the Seljuks that protected the Muslim heartland from the sword of the Crusaders. The collapse of the Seljuk Empire by 1308 may be compared with the explosion of a star. The Turks who had fought under a single banner now divided themselves up into dozens of smaller groups, each group headed by a chief, and marched out from their Turkish heartland in all directions. Military allegiance often shifted depending on the reputation of the chief and the opportunities provided by him. Expansion into Byzantine territories in Europe, and Georgia and Armenia to the northeast was sanctioned by the doctrine of ghazza. To justify encroachments into neighboring Muslim territories to the east, the Turkish chiefs were always careful to obtain a fatwa from the local kadis under one pretext or the other. It was one of these tribes, led by Uthmanali, which founded the Uthmania (Ottoman) Empire.

In the Battle of Ankara (1402), Timur decimated the Ottoman armies. Turkish power in Anatolia receded. The death of Timur in 1405 brought on a struggle for power among his sons and grandsons. It was a tradition among the Tatars, and among the Turks, that all the sons of a ruler had an equal claim to the throne. A kingdom was like a joint trust. The death of a ruler set off a scramble for power. The prince who won would become the next king. We see this pattern for succession among the Moghuls of India down to the time of Aurangzeb, and up until the 17th century among the Ottomans. Timur's vast empire had been won and was held by the iron will of a single man. His death created a political vacuum. Timur's son Shah Rukh held onto the core of Timurid territories in Central Asia and Persia. But the Mamlukes reclaimed Syria. India split off and established its own independent rule under the Sayyids. And in Anatolia, the Turks moved back in.

It was the movement of these Turkish tribes that provided the social thrust for the emergence of the Safavid Empire. Three major waves of Turkish movements may be identified between the death of Timur (1405) and the entry of Shah Ismail I into Tabriz (1501). The first wave was under the leadership of the Kara Kuyunlu (Turkish, meaning the keepers of black sheep). The Kara Kuyunlu had moved out from central Anatolia and northern Syria to Azerbaijan towards the beginning of the 14th century. By 1380, their leader Kara Muhammed established his authority over Mosul, Sinjar and Erzurum. Nominally, Kara Muhammed had accepted the protection of the Mamluke Sultans of Egypt and had ordered that the name of Mamluke Sultan Barquq be mentioned in the juma'a khutba. Kara Muhammed died in 1389 and was succeeded by his son Kara Yusuf. The same year, Timur invaded Persia. Advancing towards Azerbaijan and eastern Anatolia he demanded submission from Kara Yusuf. But Kara Yusuf resisted, took the field against Timur and was defeated. He fled westward and sought the protection of the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid I. Timur demanded from Bayazid the return of Kara Yusuf. Bayazid refused.

It was the flight of Kara Yusuf into Ottoman territories and the Ottoman refusal to surrender him to Timur that was responsible for the events leading up to the Battle of Ankara (1402). After the death of Timur, Kara Yusuf returned and re-established his authority. In 1410 he occupied Tabriz and made it his capital. In 1412 he added Baghdad to his dominions. By 1420, parts of Georgia and Armenia were under his control. At its zenith in 1430, the Kara Kuyunlu Empire extended from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf and included Azerbaijan, Iraq, and parts of Turkey and Syria. The eastern thrust of the Kara Kuyunlu did not escape the attention of Shah Rukh who had not abandoned his claims to the Timurid Empire. Moving west at the head of a large army, Shah Rukh drove away Kara Iskandar, son of Kara Yusuf who had succeeded his father, and installed Jehan Shah, another Kara Kuyunlu prince in Tabriz. When Shah Rukh died in 1447, Jehan Shah threw off his allegiance to the Timurid court in Samarqand and asserted his independence. Moving eastward, he captured Kirman, Fars, Isfahan and Herat. Assuming the title of Sultan and Ka-khan, he sought to establish the legitimacy of his rule in the eyes of the Turks, Persians and Mongols alike.

Jehan Shah was the greatest of the Kara Kuyunlu rulers and is known not only for his military exploits but also for his patronage of art, architecture and literature. He embellished Tabriz with mosques and madrasas. The blue mosque of Tabriz stands to this day. It was also a golden age for Farsi literature. Poets and writers of repute received his patronage and his protection. Jehan Shah was a follower of the Ithna Ashari Fiqh and it was his legacy in Persia and Iraq that was inherited and adopted by the Safavids. (Shah Quli, one of the descendants of Jehan Shah, fled to India in 1478, and established the QutubShahi dynasty of Golkunda in southern India. The patronage of the Ithna Ashari Fiqh in the courts of the Deccan became a factor in the political rivalries between the Moghul and Safavid courts in the 17th century.)

Jehan Shah died in a battle with the rival tribe of Aq Kuyunlu (Turkish, meaning, keepers of the white sheep). The migration of the Aq Kuyunlu constitutes the second major movement of Turkish tribes from their heartland in Anatolia to the east. The Aq Kuyunlu territories lay to the west of the territories held by the Kara Kuyunlu and included the modern cities of Erzurum, Diyarbakr, Urfa, Mardin and Sivas. Since the two tribes were neighbors, they constantly jostled with each other for turf. The Aq Kuyunlu, like their Ottoman cousins, carried on their ghazza against the Byzantine territories of Trebizond, located on the Black Sea. When Timur invaded the territories of the Kara Kuyunlu, the Aq Kuyunlu sided with Timur. Their chief, Uthman Beg accepted the overlordship of Timur (1399) and sided with him against the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara (1402). After the death of Timur, Uthman Beg continued his alliance to the Timurid court, and worked against his Kara Kuyunlu neighbors to the east.

The Aq Kuyunlu territories lay in areas where the mutual interests of the Mamlukes of Egypt, the Timurids of Central Asia and the Ottomans of Turkey overlapped and sometimes collided. Uthman Beg had to play his hand carefully. His military exploits soon attracted a large following. He expanded his territories, often with the help of the Timurid princes, but was killed in a battle with the rival Kara Kuyunlu in 1435. The usual scramble for power happened, and it was not until 1469 that the Aq Kuyunlu regained their territories under Uzun Hassan, a grandson of Uthman Beg.

Uzun Hassan is the best known of the Aq Kuyunlu dynasty. Through diplomacy and war, he expanded the territories of the Aq Kuyunlu in every

direction. He married Catherine, the daughter of the Byzantine ruler Johannes of Trebizond, thereby forming a marriage alliance with a former enemy. However, it was another of his marriage ties that was to have a far greater historical impact. He gave his sister, Khadija Begum in marriage to Shaykh Junaid who belonged at the time to the Safaviyya sufi order of Ardabil. Shaykh Junaid, himself a chief of the Turkomans based in Ardabil, had sought to expand his military-political influence, which had brought him into conflict with Jehan Shah, the Kara Kuyunlu Sultan. Shaykh Junaid's marriage to Khadija Begum gained for Uzun Hassan the support of the expanding Safaviyya order.

In a series of military campaigns, Uzun Hassan consolidated his hold on eastern Anatolia and made inroads into territories of the Kara Kuyunlu to the east, the Mamlukes to the south and the Ottomans to the west. It was during one of these campaigns that he defeated the Kara Kuyunlu Sultan Jehan Shah. Jehan Shah died in battle (1467) and the territories of Aq Kuyunlu expanded to include most of modern Persia.

The rise of Uzun Hassan attracted the attention of the European powers that were still chafing from the loss of Istanbul (1453). Pope Nicholas V declared a Crusade against the Ottomans in 1453 and, seeking to isolate the Ottomans, sent an envoy to Uzun Hassan proposing a military alliance. Uzun Hassan's response was positive. The anti-Ottoman alliance, concluded in 1464, included the Vatican, Venice, Naples, Armenia and the Empire of Uzun Hassan.

War commenced in 1463 and lasted for sixteen years. The Ottomans had the upper hand in the hostilities and expanded their territories in all directions. Sultan Mehmet II captured Trebizond (1461), Morea (1464) and Lesbos (1469). The European powers, desperate for help, asked Uzun Hassan to invade Ottoman territories from the east. As a quid pro quo, Uzun Hassan requested guns and artillery from the Venetians, weapons that he desperately lacked. An understanding was reached, and in 1471, he advanced against Karaman in south central Anatolia while the Venetian navy bombarded the Turkish coast. Mehmet II realized that between the Venetians and the Aq Kuyunlu, the latter presented by far the greater threat. In a pitched battle at Bashkent in 1473, the Ottomans under Mehmet II crushed Uzun Hassan. The latter retreated after concluding a peace treaty

recognizing the Euphrates as the border between the Ottomans and the Aq Kuyunlu territories.

Just as Jehan Shah was the best known of the Kara Kuyunlu Sultans, Uzun Hassan was the best known of the Aq Kuyunlu Sultans. He organized his empire along sound fiscal and administrative lines and documented his methodology in *Qanun Nama ye Hassan Padisha*, a treatise which was used by both the Safavids and the Ottomans in their administrative practices. Uzun Hassan died in 1478 and his empire went into rapid decline. Between 1493 and 1501, no less than six princes ascended the Aq Kuyunlu throne one after the other. It was in this unstable environment that the Safaviyya order expanded its political influence.

Shaykh Junaid, the Safaviyya sufi who had married the sister of Uzun Hassan, traveled extensively through Azerbaijan, eastern Anatolia and northern Syria, gaining additional followers. Military conflicts with the established powers were inevitable and the Safaviyya order had its share of victories and defeats. Shaykh Junaid's son Shaykh Haider and grandson Shaykh Ali continued the struggle. Political alliances often shifted, and when Shaykh Ali was killed in a battle with the Turkomans in 1493, the leadership of the Safaviyya order passed on to Ismail, brother of Shaykh Ali.

Tabriz fell to the Safaviyya in 1501 and the Safavid Empire was born. Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, had Turkish blood from his grandfather Shaykh Junaid, and Persian blood from his grandmother, Khadija Begum, sister of Uzun Hassan. Thus he combined in himself the spiritual legacy of the Safaviyya order, the tribal legacy of the Turks, and blood relationships with the Persians. In addition, he claimed his descent from Ali ibn Abu Talib. This was a powerful combination of claims to establish the legitimacy of his rule in accordance not only with religious tradition but also with the dynastic tradition of Persia and the tribal tradition of the Turks.



## **The Battle of Chaldiran**

The Turkish kingdoms of the Kara Kuyunlu and Aq Kuyunlu did not last. One of the reasons for this transience was that their rulers did not establish enduring political and administrative structures to sustain their empires. The Safavids were successful while the Kuyunlus failed because they built a legacy of lasting political and administrative structures. Their imprint on the political, social, cultural, administrative and religious life of Persia was so profound that it lasts to this day. Indeed, the Safavids had a major impact on the history and culture of Central and West Asia as well as India and Pakistan.

By any measure, Shah Ismail I (1487-1524) was a brilliant man. He was also a ruthless man. Ascending the throne of Tabriz in 1501 at the young age of fourteen, he set out to consolidate the former empire of the Aq Kuyunlu under his flag. In the uncertain times following the collapse of the Kuyunlu kingdoms, people needed a new sponsor for protection. Constant warfare had exhausted the population and some believed in the coming of the Mahdi or the resurrection of the hidden Imam. Ismail built on the groundwork laid by his grandfather, Shaykh Junaid. Junaid had traveled throughout Turkey, Persia and Syria, attracting followers, and converting the Turks to his religious order. Through his tireless struggle, the Safaviyya became a major political religious movement in West Asia. As news of Ismail's military successes spread, many of the Turkish tribes gravitated to him. Followers of the Safaviyya movement flocked to Tabriz to join his forces. A rapid expansion of his territories followed.

It is impossible to discuss the achievements of Ismail without at the same time considering his religious leanings because they determine to a large extent the subsequent relations between the emerging Safavid Empire and the Ottomans. Shah Ismail was an ardent champion of the Ithna Ashari Fiqh. The core of his guards wore a red cap with twelve perforations in it signifying their allegiance to the twelve Imams. These were called the Qazilbash. Ismail was at once the temporal and spiritual leader of the Safaviyya movement, combining in his person the dual roles of the qutub

(pole), sadr (religious head) and Sultan. His word was the law, and his followers venerated him as an invincible Shaykh in the lineage of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Ismail was also heir to the legacy of his maternal grandfather, Sultan Uzun Hassan; he therefore considered the vast Aq Kuyunlu Empire that was once ruled by Uzun Hassan rightfully his by birth.

As soon as he entered Tabriz, Ismail declared the Ithna Ashari to be the official Fiqh. At the time, most inhabitants of Tabriz followed the Shafi'i Fiqh. Ismail was ruthless in forcing his religious views on the population. Many of the Shafi'i ulema were punished, banished or worse. Such forceful introduction of Shi'a views was repeated in later years when Shah Ismail captured Baghdad, Herat and Khorasan. Whether this was done because of the youthful zeal of the king or because the Shi'a tenets provided him a distinctive political religious umbrella, it is impossible to tell. Some of the views held by Ismail were extreme, and contrary to Ithna Ashari beliefs as well. For instance, in his earlier years, Ismail I, as evidenced by the poetry he wrote, considered himself the shadow of God on earth, invincible in war. He even placed the name of Ali ibn Abu Talib before the name of the Prophet. Muslims who follow the Ithna Ashari Fiqh do not accept such views.

The Turks played a crucial role in the early history of the Safavids. Most of Ismail's army was from the Turkish ranks. Prominent Turkish tribes who joined Ismail's armies included the Turkmen, the Qajar, the Afshar, the Shamblu and the Ustajlu. When Ismail captured Tabriz from the Aq Kuyunlu, he appointed a Turk, Shamsuddin Kukunji, as his vizier. Kukunji had served in a similar capacity with the Aq Kuyunlus. The political and administrative structure of the Aq Kuyunlus was taken over and consolidated under the Safavids, thus providing a measure of continuity in the government. To provide the Persians a stake in the empire, they were given a dominant share of civilian posts.

It was Ismail's genius that in his person the Turkish and Persian elements were fused to give birth to the unique Safavid culture. Following the capture of Tabriz, Ismail moved quickly to consolidate his hold on the territories once ruled by Uzun Hassan. Advancing westward towards Anatolia, he captured Diyarbakr. He then turned his attention to Iraq, capturing Baghdad in the year 1508. Meanwhile, a strong foe had emerged in Uzbekistan in the person of Muhammed Shaibani Khan. Shaibani had

captured Herat and had extended his conquests to Khorasan, which was considered by the Safavids to be theirs.

Conflict between the expanding empires of the Safavids and the Uzbeks was inevitable. The two armies met at the Battle of Merv in 1510. Shaibani Khan fell on the battlefield. The Uzbeks were defeated, not vanquished. They regrouped under Ubaidullah Khan and continued their struggle. The victorious Shah Ismail added Herat to his empire and appointed his governor to that province.

It is in this melee, involving the Uzbeks and the Safavids that we first hear of an enterprising young man, Zaheeruddin Babur, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India. Shaibani's death did not contain the resilient Uzbeks. His successor Ubaidullah returned with a fury to re-occupy Khorasan in 1512. Babur, who was at the time a young prince of thirty-two, had his own claims to the territories of Farghana which had been taken from his father by Shaibani Khan. In the Battle of Khuzduvan in 1512 between the Safavids and the Uzbeks over the control of Khorasan, Babur fought on the side of the Safavids against Ubaidullah. Nonetheless, Ubaidullah won this battle.

Shah Ismail was not reconciled to the loss of Khorasan. The following year, when the Uzbeks got embroiled in a civil war, the Safavids reclaimed the province without a fight. Khorasan remained a Safavid province thereafter. Thus, in the course of twelve years, between 1500 and 1512, Ismail had conquered all the lands extending from Khorasan to the Euphrates and from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. He was no doubt aided in this effort by the unquestioned loyalty of his followers, and the fervent religious zeal of the Safaviyya order. His personal assets included a dynamic personality and he was fearless in combat.

Shah Ismail's legacy was to give Persia social, political and administrative stability, and to bestow upon a land ravaged by centuries of Mongol and Tatar invasions, an enduring religious cohesion and a distinct national consciousness. The present boundaries of Persia roughly correspond to those ruled by Shah Ismail, minus the territories of Iraq and eastern Anatolia which were lost to the Ottomans, and parts of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia which were lost to Russia in later centuries. Southern Afghanistan was contested between the Safavids and the Moghuls but became a part of an independent Afghanistan in the 19th century.

The large migration of Safaviyya followers from Anatolia to Tabriz caused an alarm in Istanbul. The Ottomans, initially well disposed towards the sufis, became suspicious of them after an attempt on the life of Sultan Bayazid II by a wandering dervish in 1492. When Ismail captured Tabriz in 1501 and made it his capital, the migration of Turkish followers of the Safaviyya order accelerated. The movement was so widespread that entire border districts were depopulated. In 1502, the Ottomans cracked down. Anyone suspected of being a sympathizer of the Safaviyya order or a Qazilbash was apprehended and deported to Thrace in northern Greece. Ismail's incursions into the Ottoman province of Zulqadir in 1507 only worsened the situation. But the real confrontation between the Safavids and the Ottomans started in 1511 when Sultan Bayazid II fell ill and rumors spread that he was close to his death. The Qazilbash in western Anatolia, who had felt persecuted by the Ottomans, sensed an opportunity to get even, and rebelled. Under their leader Shah Quli, who had declared himself to be the Mahdi, they went on a rampage, indulging in widespread killings and looting.

In Islamic history, as we have seen in the Murabitun revolution in the Maghrib, social disaffections have often been expressed in religious terms. The uprising of Shah Quli was not a religious war, much less a Shi'a-Sunni confrontation. Rather, it was an expression of the festering disaffection of some Turkoman tribes due to lack of opportunity in the Ottoman Empire, which had now become a political establishment. By contrast, the rapid expansion of the Safavids was a call to ambitious young men, and restless tribes, to try their luck at adventure and advancement. So potent and organized was this rebellion that the governor of the province fled before the rebels. An initial detachment of Ottoman troops under Prince Qorqud was defeated. Bayazid II finally sent his grand vizier Khadim Ali Pasha to crush the rebellion. In a pitched battle at Sivas in 1511, the rebels were routed. Both Shah Quli and Khadim Ali Pasha fell on the battlefield. However, many of the Qazilbash escaped across the Ottoman-Safavid border. Some were apprehended by Shah Ismail and punished for their excesses, but most of them found a home in the Safavid armies.

The porous border between Anatolia and Azerbaijan brought the first military confrontation between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Faced with an uprising in the east, the Ottoman Porte in Istanbul forced Sultan Bayazid

II to abdicate in favor of his son Salim (1512). This young monarch had witnessed first hand the zeal of the Qazilbash while he was governor of Trebizond, a district adjoining Azerbaijan. Salim knew that a military clash with the Safavids could not be postponed. He advanced towards Azerbaijan at the head of the disciplined janissars. Shah Ismail and Sultan Salim I met at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. The Ottomans enjoyed a distinct advantage in artillery and guns and the contest was a disaster for the Safavids. So complete was the rout, that in their haste to retreat, Shah Ismail's favorite wife was left behind in the battlefield and fell into Ottoman hands.

The Battle of Chaldiran was a defining moment in Islamic history and a benchmark for relations between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. It was the only time that the Safavids fought the Ottoman armies head-on, and it ensured that eastern Anatolia—and for a while parts of Azerbaijan—would be ruled from Istanbul. The city of Tabriz was exposed to Ottoman conquests, and the Safavids thought it prudent to shift their capital east to Isfahan. During subsequent incursions by the Ottomans, the Safavids chose to retreat, allowing the handicaps of distance, geography and terrain to arrest Ottoman advances. The Battle of Chaldiran shattered Shah Ismail's spirit. Gone was his conviction that he was invincible in battle. He did not take part in any further military engagements, delegating the fighting to his generals.

Shah Ismail, the leader of a sufi order, rose to become the father of one of the most important dynasties in Islamic history, and the founder of a brilliant Islamic culture, which at its zenith combined the best traditions of Persia with those of the Turks, the Uzbeks and the Afghans. Shah Ismail died in 1525.

## **The Caliphate moves to Istanbul**

The Battle of Chaldiran (1514) changed the balance of power in West Asia in favor of the Ottomans. Thereafter, the Safavids were contained within Persia, while the Ottomans held sway in the eastern Mediterranean. Selim I did not press his advantage after the battle and pursue Shah Ismail. The harsh winter in Azerbaijan and the mountains of eastern Anatolia presented serious problems and there was unrest in his army. After briefly camping in Tabriz, Selim I withdrew. Soon thereafter, Shah Ismail returned to the city and re-occupied it.

The territories of West Asia lay where the mutual interests of three powerful dynasties—the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mamlukes converged. The mutual interactions among these three empires determined the course of further developments in Islamic history. The Mamlukes, a Turkish people who had settled in the Nile Delta, came to power around the year 1250, displacing the Ayyubids. Izzaddin Aybek, a Turkish general, was the first of the Mamluke rulers. We have come across his name in connection with his marriage to Shajarat al Durr, the first and only Muslim queen of Egypt (1249-1250).

The Mamlukes were European and Central Asian slaves who were captured by Viking raiders in north and eastern Europe and sold to Muslim merchants in the bazaars around the Caspian Sea. Brought to Muslim courts, they were trained in the military academies, given instruction in Islam, and inducted into the armed services. They proved to be the bravest and the most loyal of soldiers in the service of the

Sultans. Since the army was the vehicle for advancement, many of the Mamlukes rose to be general officers, married princesses of the courts, and went on to establish their own dynasties.

Soon after the Mamlukes came to power in Egypt, Baghdad was captured and destroyed by Hulagu Khan (1258), and the Abbasid Caliphate came to an end. The Mongols trampled most of the Abbasid princes to death, but one of them escaped to Cairo. There he was welcomed as the last scion of

the Abbasids and installed as the Caliph (1261). The Caliphate was the vortex of Islamic social, political and religious life. Only the caliphs could bestow legitimacy on a Sultan. And the caliphs were the theoretical custodians of the shrines in Mecca and Madina. The presence of the Caliphate in Cairo after 1261 bestowed enormous prestige on that city and on the Mamlukes who ruled from there.

A second element in the prestige of the Mamlukes was the resistance they offered the Mongols. It was the Mamlukes of Egypt under Sultan Baybars who brought a halt to the westward advance of the Mongols. Their victory over a combined Mongol-Crusader force at Ayn Jalut (1261) confirmed their pre-eminent position as the protectors of Mecca and Madina. Similarly, it was the Mamlukes of Delhi, who stopped the advance of the Mongols at the River Indus, in a series of campaigns lasting fifty years (1220-1270).

By the year 1515, the Mamlukes had been in power in Cairo for over 250 years. Court intrigues and political infighting had sapped their energies, although their political control still extended over all of Egypt, the Sudan, Eritrea, eastern Libya, Arabia, Yemen, and Syria. It was in the northern reaches of the Syrian frontier that the mutual interests of the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mamlukes overlapped—and collided. After the Battle of Chaldiran, Sultan Selim proceeded to consolidate his hold on Kurdish territories. The district of Mosul fell to the Ottomans in 1516. The Ottomans reorganized these territories bestowing a large degree of autonomy on each district. This was most welcome to the Kurds who had chafed under the autocratic rule of the Aq Qyunlus. It was about this time that Ottoman conflicts with the Mamlukes began.

During his march to Persia, Sultan Selim had requested Alauddaulah, Mamluke Governor in northern Syria to refrain from giving aid to the Qazilbash who were harassing the advancing Ottoman contingents. Alauddaulah gave a polite reply but continued to provide covert aid to the Safavid Qazilbash. The Mamluke Sultan Kansuah al Ghauri had hoped that the Safavids would triumph over the Ottomans at the Battle of Chaldiran and had instructed Alauddaulah to assist the Persians. Unfortunately, for the Mamlukes, the outcome was the opposite. After his decisive victory at Chaldiran, Salim turned his attention to northern Syria. Alauddaulah was captured and slain. Even at this late stage, neither the Ottomans nor the

Mamlukes wanted a final showdown. Envoys were exchanged and messages sent. Political maneuvers and military posturing continued. Kansuah hoped that a show of force on the frontier would deter any further Ottoman advance, since Salim was still concerned about a Safavid attack to the rear. He ordered his forces to begin a campaign on the frontier, and he himself advanced towards Syria in April 1516.

The Mamlukes were in a difficult economic and political position. The Portuguese, who sailed around the coast of Africa in 1496, had by the year 1515 devastated the Muslim trading centers in East Africa, occupied Goa (India), Hormuz (Persia) and the Straits of Malacca (Malaysia). The profitable spice trade, which had previously flowed through Cairo, was now in the hands of the Portuguese. With the loss of their eastern trade, revenues decreased and Egypt was in dire financial straits. To contain the Portuguese, the Mamlukes had commenced naval activity in the Red Sea and further out into the Arabian Sea, which caused a further drain on the treasury. When Kansuah advanced towards Syria, so concerned was he about the remaining state treasury that he took it with him and had it buried in Aleppo. The financial condition of Egypt was not unknown to Sultan Salim, who was undeterred by the Mamluke military posturing.

The two dynasties now moved towards a military collision. More envoys were exchanged seeking to avoid a confrontation but it was too late. Selim moved through Konya, reinforced his troops with contingents from Kurdistan, Rumilia and Trebizond. The two armies met at Marj Dabik on the outskirts of Aleppo in August 1516. Each side had about sixty thousand men under arms. The battle was joined in the classical pattern with the center, left flanks and right flanks facing each other. Two important factors gave the advantage to the Ottomans. First, they had total superiority in cannons and artillery. The Mamlukes, locked up as they were with the technology of the past, considered it unmanly to fight with a gun rather than a sword. Second, the Governor of Aleppo, Khair Beg, was in secret collusion with the Ottomans. In the thick of battle, he spread the rumor that Kansuah had been slain. The Mamluke lines broke, and the battle ended in total victory for the Ottomans.

Sultan Selim now pressed his advantage. Advancing deeper into Syria he occupied Damascus and Palestine. Word was sent to Tuman Bey, son of Kansuah, who had ascended the throne of Egypt, to submit to the rule of



Istanbul. When the answer was negative, the Ottomans advanced towards the Mamluke capital. The Battle of Cairo was joined towards the end of January 1517. Tuman Bey and the Mamlukes fought desperately but were finally overcome. Tuman Bey himself was captured and was executed in Cairo the following April.

The conquest of Egypt meant that the Ottoman Empire now included Syria, Egypt, the Sudan and Arabia, in addition of all of Anatolia and southeastern Europe. It had become the pre-eminent land power in Eurasia. Most important, the Ottomans controlled the cities of Mecca and Madina, and were considered the custodians of the two cities throughout the Islamic world. To sanctify this newfound position, Sultan Selim had the last of the Abbasid caliphs brought to Istanbul where he was made to abdicate the title of caliph in favor of Salim. Thus, in the year 1517, the Caliphate, that singular pole around which much of Islamic history revolves, moved from Cairo to Istanbul. The Turkish Sultan was now the temporal as well as the religious leader of all Sunni Muslims and was duty bound to assist and protect Muslims around the globe. The Ottoman Sultans discharged this responsibility for 400 years until modern times, with exceptional devotion, zeal and dedication, often at a great sacrifice to the Turks themselves.

## Babur in Delhi

Zahiruddin Muhammed Babur (1483-1530), founder of the Moghul dynasty in the subcontinent, was a descendant of Timur from his fathers side and of Genghiz Khan from his mother's side. Since Timur himself was a Tatar and married into a Birlas Turkish family, it may also be claimed that Babur was a Turk. The word Moghul is a Farsi corruption for Mongol, and it stayed with Babur's dynasty, even though the house of Babur preferred an association with the name of his great great grandfather, Timur.

In the year 1500, the India-Pakistan subcontinent was a border state in the larger Islamic world. It was somewhat insulated from Central Asia due to its geography—the high Hindu Kush Mountains and the difficult passes on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. But it was a prize that no would-be conqueror could disregard. The rich Indo-Gangetic plains and the southern highlands of the Deccan were net exporters of goods up until the 18 th century. Since ancient times, the spices, ivory, iron and manufactured goods of the subcontinent were valued all over the world. Traders from the Roman Empire, and later from the Islamic Empire based in Baghdad, carried on a brisk trade with the western coast of India. To the northwest, the Silk Road to China and the land route to Tabriz brimmed with commercial activity. The traders paid for the spices in gold and silver, and so the subcontinent had a net surplus inflow of precious metals. Much of the wealth found its way to the rulers, and the principal cities such as Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Surat and Dacca. These cities became rich prizes for a potential conqueror. It was for this reason that India was plundered time and again by invaders in search of loot. Often, the conquerors liked the easy life of Hindustan, settled down and founded new dynasties. Sometimes, as it happened with Timur (1400) and Nadir Shah (1739), they just took the loot and departed. Others, like the British, took the loot but stayed as long as they could.

The collapse of the Timurid Empire threw Central and West Asia into turmoil. Out of this turmoil new empires were born. Shah Ismail I, the head of the Safaviyya brotherhood, successfully consolidated his power in Persia and founded the Safavid dynasty. Zahiruddin Babur, a Timurid prince, was

a contemporary of Shah Ismail. He was the son of Omar Shaykh, a Timurid prince who had inherited the bountiful valley of Farghana, including Timur's capital city of Samarqand. Omar Shaykh, who ruled Farghana from the town of Andijan, died in 1494 when Babur was a boy of eleven. In the usual Timurid tradition, there was a scramble among Omar Shaykh's brothers and sons to grab the throne. Babur's uncle Sultan Ahmed was the first to make his move. But Ahmed's sudden death, and the incapability of his sons, left Babur in possession of Farghana and Samarqand. The infighting continued with Babur and his brother Jehangir jostling for advantage. Meanwhile, to the east of Farghana, a powerful Uzbek kingdom had arisen, headed by Muhammed Shaibani Khan (1451-1510). The Uzbeks expanded to the north at the expense of the Mongols, and to the west at the expense of the Timurids. Taking advantage of the infighting in the House of Timur, Shaibani invaded Farghana in 1501, defeated Babur at the Battle of Sar-e-Pul, and occupied Samarqand. Babur fled and for three years wandered around the hills of Afghanistan and the plains of Khorasan. He made several attempts to recapture Samarqand but each time suffered defeat at the hands of Shaibani. Babur, and his descendants the Great Moghuls of Delhi, never gave up their claims on Samarqand. As late as 1630, Emperor Shah Jehan, great-grandson of Babur, launched an unsuccessful expedition from Agra to recapture Samarqand.

In the political turmoil of the times, there were always opportunities for an enterprising prince. Babur found a home in Kabul, which he took in 1504. Meanwhile, the Uzbek advance continued southward. In 1505, Shaibani invaded the territories of Hussain Baiqara, another Timurid prince, who ruled from the city of Herat. In response to a request for help from Baiqara, Babur advanced towards Herat but withdrew because Baiqara died (1506) before Babur could reach there. The Uzbeks continued their advance in Khorasan, taking Merv and Nishapur as they went. The Uzbek capture of Khorasan brought Shah Ismail himself into the fray. In 1510, Ismail advanced into Khorasan at the head of a large army. During this period Babur fought on the side of the Safavid troops against Shaibani Khan. Notwithstanding the alliance between the Safavid Shah Ismail I and Babur, Shaibani was victorious. Turning south, the Uzbeks occupied Qandahar and threatened the home base of Babur in Kabul both from the north and the south. Fortunately for Babur, Shaibani withdrew from Qandahar after

accepting a tribute from the local inhabitants and was killed the same year in a skirmish with the Turkomans.

After the death of Shaibani, the Persians successfully reclaimed Khorasan. In return for the help he had received, Shah Ismail permitted Babur to keep any territory in Afghanistan and Farghana that he would wrest from the Uzbeks. Ismail withdrew from Khorasan leaving his general Yar Ahmed Khuzani as the Governor. The independent spirit of Babur found it unacceptable to live with the overlordship of the Safavids. Babur was appalled by the heavy-handedness with which Khuzani forced Ithna Ashari tenets on the predominantly Sunni population of Herat, and the brutality with which he killed the inhabitants of conquered cities. In 1512, at the Battle of Ghuzduvan, Babur withheld his support of the Safavids. The Uzbeks were victorious and Khuzani was killed in the battle.

Disappointed with his attempts to recapture Samarqand, and with the military-political turmoil in Central Asia, Babur turned his attention east towards Hindustan. He considered the throne of Delhi to be his by virtue of his legacy from Timur. Delhi was at this time ruled by Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-1526), the last of a dynasty, which had ruled India since 1450. Ibrahim, unlike his father Sikandar Lodhi, was a political dwarf who could not manage the intrigues in the Delhi court. India was rife with instability. Bengal and Punjab were in revolt. The Rajputs under Rana Sangha were up in arms.

Babur made several incursions into India through the Khyber Pass and found the military climate favorable. An opportunity to cross the Indus arose when Daulat Khan, governor of Punjab, sought Babur's help against Ibrahim Lodhi. The year 1525 saw Babur's armies in Lahore. The following year, he advanced towards Delhi at the head of 18,000 cavalymen, well armed with muskets and supported by a phalanx of Turkish cannon. Ibrahim Lodhi met him on the plains of Panipat in April 1526 with his huge army of over 100,000, backed by war elephants. The Moghul advantage in firearms carried the day. As Babur's artillery fell on the elephants, they turned around and trampled the Indian infantry. Ibrahim Lodhi died on the battlefield. Babur was in Delhi and the Moghul Empire was born.

Babur advanced along the Gangetic plains, captured Agra (1526), and moved into Kanauj. The following year (1527), in a pitched battle at Khanua, he overcame the combined resistance of the Rajputs under Rana

Sangha of Mewar, and of some of the local Muslim chieftains. Ibrahim Lodhi's brother Mahmud Lodhi escaped from Panipat and raised an army in Bengal. In 1529, this resistance was crushed and Babur became the undisputed Emperor of Hindustan.

The Battle of Panipat in 1526 is a turning point in global history. With Babur's victory, the Delhi Sultanate, which had been established in 1192 by Muhammed Ghori, came to an end. Its place was taken by the Great Moghul Empire which consolidated the territories of South Asia and left as its legacy the culture, art, architecture, administration, music, language, cuisine and customs of modern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

It was the Moghul period that witnessed the first commercial contacts with European powers, which in due course changed the history of Europe and Asia alike. Babur was not only a tireless soldier and a consummate leader, but a great writer as well. His memoirs collected under Babur Nama, are considered one of the greatest testaments of a ruler, and occupy a place in world historiography alongside the memoirs of Caesar. His poignant death brings out not only the sensitivity of his soul, but also the predominant sufic bent of his times. In 1530, his son Humayun fell ill. The best that medical science had to offer did not cure him and all hope was lost. Babur raised his hands in prayer to the

Almighty, and beseeching Him to spare the life of his son, begged to take his life instead. It is related that after the prayer, Babur went around his dying son's bed seven times, each time repeating his supplication. He died soon thereafter, while his son recovered and became the next Emperor of Hindustan.

## Akbar, the Great Moghul

Jalaluddin Muhammed Akbar Padashah Ghazi, as his celebrated biographer Abul Fazal refers to him, was one of the greatest rulers produced by Hindustan. Muslim historians are ambiguous about his rule. Some consider him to be one of the greatest among Muslim rulers, while others look at him as a renegade. In the entire span of fourteen hundred years of Islamic history, no Muslim emperor stretched the social and religious envelope as an Islamic sovereign, as did Akbar, while remaining within the fold of Islam. And no one tackled the complex issues of Muslim interactions with a largely non-Muslim world with the sincerity, zeal, passion, originality, common sense, and commitment demonstrated by this complex, enigmatic, gifted, energetic, purposeful monarch.

The orthodox thought he had become a Hindu. The Hindus were convinced he died a Muslim. Others said he was pro-Shi'a, while some Shi'as said he persecuted them. The Jesuits sent from Goa thought he was a sure candidate for conversion to Catholic Christianity. The Jains and Parsis felt at home in his presence and considered him one of their own. He befriended the Sikhs, and protected mosques and temples alike. Akbar was a universal man; he was more than any single group thought of him. He was the purest representation of that folk Islam that grew up in Asia after the destruction wrought by the Mongols (1219-1252).

Jalaluddin Akbar was born to a Sunni father, Emperor Humayun, and Hamida Banu, daughter of a learned Shi'a Shaykh Ali Akbar, at the Rajasthan-Sindh outpost of Amarkot (1542), while Humayun was wandering in the Great Indian Desert after his defeat by Sher Shah

Suri (1540-1555). Sher Shah is remembered in Indian history for his efficient administration and his extensive construction of roads and canals. Akbar's grandfather Zahiruddin Babur, himself a deeply spiritual Timurid prince from Samarqand, had taken Hindustan in 1526, and had consolidated his hold on the Indo-Gangetic plains. The hapless Humayun inherited the kingdom but was unable to fight off the Afghan challenge led by Sher Shah

Suri. So poor was Humayun when Akbar was born that he had no gifts to give his entourage on the birth of an heir. It is said that the proud father took out a small bottle of rose perfume, and anointed each one of his courtiers, proclaiming that the fame of the newborn would spread like the sweet scent of the rose in that perfume. History would prove him right.

Humayun's misfortunes had a direct bearing on the early childhood of Akbar. In Afghanistan, Humayun tried to reclaim Kabul from his brother, Kamran, but lost the skirmish. His retreat from Afghanistan was so hasty that the infant Akbar fell into the hands of Askari, another of Humayun's brothers, who was allied with Kamran. It was an unwritten covenant among the Timurid princes that while they scrambled for the throne upon the death of the king, the children were safe from the ensuing fratricide. Askari and his wife treated the infant with the utmost love. Akbar had no time for formal education but the keen intellect of the prodigious child absorbed the wisdom of the ancient people of the Hindu Kush, and their values of valor and courage.

When he had lost all hope of prevailing over Kamran, Humayun proceeded to Persia where the Safavid Tahmasp warmly received him. The Persian Emperor saw a golden opportunity to turn Hindustan into another bastion of Ithna Ashari Fiqh and offered to help Humayun if he would embrace Shi'a views. Humayun accepted the military help but he was ambivalent about his religious commitments. With Persian help, he first captured Kabul, and when the successors of Sher Shah Suri fell into arguments and squabbles, Humayun marched triumphantly back to Agra, the first Moghul capital. Hamida Banu and Akbar returned to Hindustan.

Humayun was always a prince of misfortune. Even his end was full of pathos. He was an avid patron of literature and had built a library, which housed more than 150,000 precious manuscripts. Even in his flight, when the Emperor literally had nothing, he carried the literary treasure with him, loaded on camels. Late one afternoon, in 1556, as he was in his study on the upper floor of the library, Humayun heard the call to prayer. The Emperor hastened to descend a steep stone staircase to join the congregational prayer. He slipped, his head hit a stone, and the following day died from head injuries.

Akbar was only thirteen when he ascended the throne. A key decision made by Humayun played a crucial role in the early life of Akbar. He had

appointed Bairam Khan, a loyal and trusted friend, as Akbar's mentor and wali (protector). When Humayun recaptured Agra, Bairam Khan rose rapidly through the ranks and became Khan Khanan (prime minister). The capable and loyal Bairam Khan meticulously carried out the initial consolidation of the empire, defeating a determined challenge from the Afghans led by an Indian general Hemu, and successively captured Agra, Gwalior and Jaunpur. Bairam fell victim to court intrigue. Akbar retired him, gave him a generous pension, and sent him off to Mecca for Hajj (1560). The following two years marked a brief period of ascendancy for Adham Khan, a foster brother of Akbar, but when Adham became tyrannical, Akbar had him eliminated, and assumed direct control of the affairs of the Empire.

A vigorous consolidation of the empire began and continued into the last years of Akbar's reign. Malwa (1560), Chitor (1567), Rathambur (1567), Gujrat (1573), and Bengal (1574) were added to the empire. In 1581, when his brother Mirza Hakim occupied Lahore, Akbar moved his headquarters to that city and stayed there for fifteen years to contain Mirza and ward off a threat of invasion from the powerful Uzbeks of Samarqand. Lahore was an ideal base from which to conduct operations to the northwest. From the Punjab, Akbar moved to capture Kashmir (1593), Sindh (1593), Baluchistan (1594) and Makran (1594). In 1595, he took Qandahar, a key trading post between Persia and India, from the Safavids. For a hundred years thereafter, this city in southern Afghanistan was contested between the Moghuls and the Safavids.

In 1591, Akbar invited the Bahmani Sultans of Ahmednagar, Bidar, Golkunda and Bijapur to submit to the Moghuls. But the Sultans of the Deccan, flush from their recent victory over the kingdom of Vijayanagar (1565), refused. International politics played a part in this refusal. Many of the Deccan Sultans followed the Ithna Ashari Fiqh, and some toyed with the idea of accepting the Safavids as their protectors. Until the advent of Akbar, and the subsequent consolidation of the empire, India was a border state in the great tapestry of Muslim states extending from Morocco to the China Sea. The religious convulsions of Central and West Asia invariably had an impact on the Indian subcontinent. The triumph of the Safavids in Persia, and their rivalry with the Sunni Uzbeks to the north and the Ottomans to the west, brought this rivalry to India also. The Safavids were avid promoters of



the Ithna Ashari Fiqh just as the Ottomans were champions of the Sunni School of Fiqh. So, when the Bahmani Sultans of Deccan toyed with the idea of joining the Safavid camp, Akbar would not tolerate it.

Outside interference on the soil of Hindustan was unacceptable to the Great Moghul. Indeed, at no time in Indian history, has a strong central government in the north tolerated splinter kingdoms either in Bengal or in the south. Akbar's move into the Deccan was precipitated by the geopolitical rivalry between India and Persia and was not a reflection of the Shi'a-Sunni split. In 1596, Akbar moved on Ahmednagar, which fell after a determined resistance by its Queen Chand Bibi. When he returned to Agra in 1601, the empire extended over all of north and central India, Pakistan, Baluchistan, Bengal and Afghanistan. It was the richest and most prosperous kingdom in the world, and had a population of eighty million, about the same as the entire population of Europe.

To augment the standing army, and to reward his cohorts, Akbar instituted a system of mansabs and jagirs. Jagirs were land grants given to courtiers for meritorious service. Mansabs were lands allocated to nobles in proportion to the number of mounted cavalry that the mansabdar would supply in times of war. The number of mounted horsemen requisitioned in time of war ranged from ten for a mansabdar to ten thousand for a prince or an Emir ul Omara. The Mansabs served the empire well during the period of its expansion. But once decay set in, they also compounded the process of decay. The larger mansabdars acted as feudal lords over their peasants. When the central power of the empire weakened (1707-1740), tax collection could not be enforced, and the Emperor's treasury was drained, further weakening his authority.

Thus India entered the age of feudalism just as England was working its way out of it. The mansabs and jagirs stayed on during the British era. They were abolished in independent India through successive land reforms. In Pakistan, they have continued to this day, and exercise a large influence on the politics of the country.

Akbar was one of the foremost reformers in India's long history. He divided his vast empire into subas (provinces), each one governed by a trusted emir or a prince. The governors were rotated to minimize corruption and were made responsible for their decisions. The subas were subdivided into sarkars (districts), the sarkars into parganas (subdistricts). Each city had

a kotwal (mayor), and the surrounding countryside was administered by a foudar. Tax collection and fiscal affairs were rationalized. Akbar abolished child marriages, forbade sati (the burning of a widow with her husband's funeral pyre which was practiced in some Hindu circles), built roads, reduced taxes on farmland to one-third of the yield, and made justice for all his subjects a cornerstone of his realm. Farmers were encouraged to bring more land under cultivation, guilds had official blessing, and both internal and international trade prospered. He treated the Hindus as people of the Book, abolished the jizya, bestowed on them religious autonomy, and allowed their own law, the dharma-shastra to be used in internal disputes. To the newly emerging community of Sikhs, he gave the area of Amritsar as a land grant, and promoted peaceful coexistence. His philosophy of sulah e kul (peace between all communities) embraced all of his subjects with himself as a father figure.

Akbar, the empire builder, was aware of the geopolitics of the age. With the Ottomans, who were the dominant land power in Eurasia, his relations were close and cordial. Akbar acknowledged the Caliphate in Istanbul as one "in the tradition of the four rightly guided Caliphs", while maintaining the independence of Hindustan. Relations with the Safavids of Persia were strained because of warfare over the control of the important trading center of Qandahar in southern Afghanistan. Qandahar was captured by Akbar but was lost to the Persians during the reign of Jehangir. Akbar had a working relationship with the Portuguese who saw in him a possible convert to their faith. The Portuguese dominated the Indian Ocean, and their goodwill was required to guarantee safe passage for pilgrims to Mecca.

Akbar's method of managing geopolitics was through matrimonial politics. Of Akbar's wives, one was a Rajput; one was a Turk, and one a Portuguese. In 1562, at the age of 20, Emperor Akbar married Princess Jodha Bai, daughter of Raja Bharmal of Amber, Rajasthan. This was a benchmark not only in the administration of the Great Moghul, but also in the larger global history of the Muslim people. Jodha Bai was the mother of Emperor Jehangir and was the Queen Mother of Hindustan during the reign of the Great Moghul.

From a political perspective, the issue before the Delhi Sultanate since its inception in 1205 was its relationship with the people of Hindustan who were predominantly Hindu. The first invasions had brought but a few

Turkomans and Mamlukes into the subcontinent. Their presence was a thin veneer, which masked the gigantic edifice of India. There was little participation in the imperial administration from people of Indian origin, either Hindu or Muslim. Alauddin Khilji (d. 1316), who was perhaps the most far-sighted Sultan in pre-Moghul India, opened the doors of employment to Indians. However, the empire still suffered from a basic flaw in that it was rule by coercion rather than by consensus. The Khilji Empire, which embraced the entire subcontinent, lasted only a generation (1290-1320), followed by the Tughlaq Empire, which had a similar brief tenure. During the rule of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d.1351), the empire disintegrated, with independent kingdoms emerging in Bengal, Gujrat, Vijayanagar and the Deccan. Subsequent Sultanates of Delhi, such as the Lodhis (1451-1526), were mere shadows of the great empire of Alauddin Khilji and were limited to Delhi and its surrounding regions.

Akbar was cognizant of this terminal defect and sought to redress it. Sher Shah Suri (1540-1545) had provided a good example, and Akbar sought to build on it. The highest posts of the government were opened to all of his subjects, whether they were Hindu or Muslim, or came from Afghan, Persian or Indian backgrounds. His empire was a meritocracy and he promoted men of talent wherever he found them. While the two brothers Faizi (1545-1595) and Abul Fazal (1551-1602) were prominent courtiers, so were Raja Todarmal and Raja Man Singh. Todarmal's organization of the fiscal affairs of the empire lasted well into the 19th century, until the British replaced it. Man Singh served as the commander of the armies during several missions, and also as governor of the predominantly Muslim provinces of Kabul and Bengal.

Akbar, a product of folk Islam, had no difficulty with classical Indian arts, and became an avid promoter of Hindustani music, classical dances and Hindustani literature. The celebrated Tan Sen, perhaps the greatest of Indian musicians, lived at Akbar's court. Hindustani music styles, classical dances, the Urdu and Hindi languages, went through a profound transformation in Akbar's court.

The Emperor's reach to his subjects transcended the mere affairs of state. Through his marriages to a Rajput Hindu princess, a Turkish Muslim noblewoman, and a Portuguese Christian lady, he sought not just to lay the foundation of an Indian empire, but also to transform the very essence of

Muslim interaction with non-Muslims. Not until the Turkomans entered India (1191 onwards), did Muslims face the gut-wrenching issue that continues to haunt Muslims to this day: What does it mean to be a Muslim in a predominantly non-Muslim world? During its classical age, Islam had come into contact with the Jews and the Christians. But interactions with these two faiths were relatively easy; they were accepted as people of the book. Interactions with Persia were also comparatively easy, because most Persians accepted Islam early in Islamic history, and were absorbed into the mainstream. In India, they met up with the ancient Vedic civilization, and the answers were not easy. During the zenith of classical Islamic civilizations, in the courts of Harun (d. 809) and Mamun (d. 833), Hindu scholars had arrived with their books of astronomy and mathematics, and had participated in the translation of these books into Arabic. But these interactions were academic and limited to the learned men of science and culture.

When the Turkoman territories extended to Delhi, the question of interaction with the Hindus was not merely academic; it became the central political issue. The difficulties of accommodating the ancient, non-Semitic religions of Hindustan were compounded by the disaster of Mongol invasions. Genghiz Khan's invasions produced a sharp discontinuity in Islamic history. The great centers of learning, which had housed scholars of repute, were no longer available to provide answers to pressing issues. Cultivation of the sciences of Fiqh had essentially come to a halt some time after the death of Imam Hanbal (780-855). Indian Islam thus grew up and matured in the post-Mongol era, guided not by the great fuqaha who had dominated the Abbasid era, but by the sufis who preserved the spiritual dimension of faith.

The initial response of the Turkomans to the Indian question was one of rejection. Indians were treated as non-believers, accorded the status of protected people (Arabic word: dhimmi or zimmi), made to pay the jizya, and in return were exempt from military conscription. The issue of whether or not they were at one time "people of the book" was not raised nor was it answered. The arrangement served the Delhi Sultans well because in their perennial warfare, they needed cash and jizya provided a source of ready cash. This also explains why the Sultans made little attempt to propagate Islam, since that would reduce their tax revenues. The attempts made by

Emperor Alauddin to bring Indians into the realm were purely administrative; the fundamental issues of religious compatibility were not addressed.

Akbar was the first Muslim emperor to extend to the Hindus the same status as that accorded to the Christians and the Jews from the beginning of the Islamic period. This was a bold move, one that met resistance from the more conservative ulema. Akbar married a Rajput princess, and allowed her to practice her faith within his palace, just as earlier Turkish Sultans had married Byzantine Christian princesses and allowed them to practice Christianity within their quarters. Hindus were treated as People of the Book, the *jizya* was abolished, and Hindus became generals and commanders in the army as well as governors and divans in the empire. By his personal example, the Emperor sought to build families with the Hindus, thus extending the reach of Islam to the Vedic civilization. The fourth Great Moghul, Jehangir, was a product of Rajput-Moghul intermarriage. Akbar's legacy stayed with the empire well into its years of decline. Some of the princes became scholars of Sanskrit as well as Persian and Arabic. Prince Dara Shikoh, eldest son of Shah Jehan, translated the Indian classic, *Mahabharata*, into Persian.

Akbar's eclectic mind was always searching for spiritual answers. In the splendid city of Fatehpur Sikri, which he founded, he built a house of worship called *Ibadat Khana*. Here, he invited scholars and listened to their discourse on matters of religion and ethics. Initial sittings with Muslim scholars broke up in disputes and arguments. On one occasion, two of his most prominent courtiers, Shaykh Abdul Nabi and Shaykh Maqsum ul Mulk went after each other with such vehemence that the Emperor had to intervene. Disillusioned, Akbar opened up the discourse to men of other faiths. Hindu priests expounded the philosophy of karma; Jains presented the doctrine of *ahimsa*; Parsis joined in to discuss the tenets of their ancient faith. In 1580, he sent word to the Portuguese governor of Goa that he would like to hear from Christian priests. The governor, sensing an historic opportunity to convert the Great Moghul, and win over Asia to his faith, promptly dispatched three Jesuit priests, Antony Monserrate, a Spaniard; Rudolf Aquaviva, an Italian; and Francis Enrique, a Persian. The three brought with them paintings of Jesus and Mary which the Emperor himself helped carry to the quarters of the priests. Akbar listened to the Christians,

as he had listened to Muslims—Shi'a and Sunni alike—Hindus, Jains and Parsis, benefiting from the many insights offered by the learned men of all religions. But at no point during these years did the Emperor renounce his faith in Islam or embrace another faith. He remained a Muslim throughout his life and set an example of open-mindedness, which has seldom been matched among monarchs of any faith. The disappointed Jesuits returned to Goa in 1582.

The house of Timur, from which the Great Moghuls claimed their descent, was deeply spiritual. Timur himself, despite his cruel and destructive conquests, was a religious man who honored sufi shaykhs, living and dead. Babur's spiritual disposition showed up in the manner in which he died. Humayun himself made it a point to visit the tombs of sufi shaykhs during his wanderings in Persia. This characteristic showed up in Akbar also.

The history of the Chishti order of Ajmer is closely interwoven with the history of the Delhi Sultanate. Emperor Alauddin (d. 1316) treated the Chishti shaykhs with respect and had prospered. Emperor Muhammed bin Tughlaq treated them harshly and had paid a heavy political price. Akbar was a devoted follower of Shaykh Moeenuddin Chishti (1142-1236) of Ajmer, whose tomb he visited on foot every year. When his wife Jodha Bai was pregnant with Jehangir, he sent her under a Rajput escort, to live in the zawiyah of Shaykh Salim Chishti, who was the living scion of the Chishtiya order. It was at the hermitage of the shaykh that Prince Jehangir was born, and the emperor named him Salim in honor of the shaykh. It was also in honor of the shaykh that Akbar raised the majestic city of Fatehpur Sikri near his hermitage. Both Akbar and Jehangir held the shaykh and his memory in the highest esteem and his name was taken in court circles with the greatest respect.

India belonged to the sufis, and the emperor was no exception. Islam in the subcontinent of the 16 th century was the Islam of the sufis, and Akbar was its finest product. He did not claim divinity as had the Fatimid Caliph al Hakim (d.1021), nor did he claim Divine attributes as had Shah Ismail (d.1524), founder of the Safavid dynasty. Akbar did not even claim that he was a saint. But he was the king-emperor of Hindustan, an unlettered prince with the intellect of a giant, a deeply spiritual man with an unending search for transcendence in religion.

Akbar was the first, and perhaps the only Muslim Emperor to reach out as far as he did to embrace peoples of non-Semitic religions. Previous contacts with Christians and Jews were on the basis of coexistence. In the Abbasid as well as Ottoman realms, Christians and Jews were accepted as people of the Book and were given autonomy to govern their own internal affairs. Akbar went one step beyond coexistence; he tried co-union with the Hindus. This was the first and only such attempt by a Muslim monarch of any significance. This single fact accords Akbar a pre-eminent position among the great monarchs of the world.

Deen-e-Ilahi, a compendium of ethical standards, which Akbar had extracted from the religious discourses he attended, was misunderstood as a new religion. These standards are to be found in Ain-e-Akbari, a collection of court edicts compiled by Abul Fazal. Some of the misunderstandings arose as a result of poor translations from Persian, and some from a lack of understanding of tasawwuf. For instance, Akbar considered his relations with his followers as that of a pir-murid (sufi shaykh and his disciple), not that of a prophet-follower. The emperor did not seek converts and there is every indication that he discouraged people from becoming his murids and tolerated open dissent with his practices. Even Raja Man Singh had dubious feelings about the emperor wearing a holy mantle. To those who did accept him as their pir, the emperor gave a medallion on which was inscribed "Allah u Akbar" (God is Greater). When a courtier reminded him that the emblem could be misunderstood to mean that Akbar had claimed divinity, the emperor replied that shirk (association of partners with God) had not even entered his thoughts. Indeed, the emperor continued to perform congregational prayers whenever he was on military campaigns. On his return from Kabul in 1580, he is known to have performed Juma'a prayers in Peshawar. On occasions, he insisted on giving the khutba, a practice in keeping with the example of the early Companions of the Prophet, but long since taken over by professional kadis. While it is true that he patronized the construction of four large Chaitanya temples at Mathura (1573), it is also true that the emperor himself built great mosques. The magnificent mosque in the courtyard of Shaykh Salim Chishti (1572) in Fatehpur Sikri is a monument to Akbar's dedication to Islam.

On the exoteric plane, Akbar's experimentation with ethics comes across as religious innovation. But at the esoteric plane, his initiatives are in

consonance with the spirituality of the age. By the 16th century, the Chishtiya sufi order had found a welcome home on Indian soil. Vaishnava Hinduism of Mathura was attracting more devotees among Hindus. Guru Nanak (1468-1539) had just founded a new religion,

Sikhism, to bring Islam and Hinduism closer together. Each group pushed its point of view aggressively. Akbar, as the Emperor, was aware of these movements. His discussions in the Ibadat Khana, with leading exponents of various religions, had given him an insight into each one.

As a devotee of the Chishti order, Akbar was in tune with sufi practices, which were animated by the philosophy of Wahdat al Wajud (unity of existence). Although this philosophy was in existence since the earliest days of Islam, it appears in the writings of Sadruddin Konawi, a student of Ibn al Arabi (d. 1240). Born in Spain during the waning years of Al Muhaddith rule, Ibn al Arabi traveled through North Africa to Syria and Arabia. He learned the tasawwuf of Divine Love from the sufi (lady) masters of the era, Nurah Fatima binte Al Muthanna of Cordova, Shams Yasminah Um ul-Fakhr al Marhena az-Zaytun of Cordova, and Ain as Shams, of Mecca. His standing in sufi circles is so great that he is referred to as al Shaykh al Akbar (the greatest of the Shaykhs). A powerful speaker and a prolific writer, he influenced the evolution of tasawwuf in lands as diverse as Morocco and Indonesia. His masterpiece works include Ruh al Quds, Tarjamanul Ishwaq and Futuhat al Makkiyah. He passed away in Damascus.

According to Wahdat al Wajud (unity of existence), all creation is illusion; the only Reality is God. The more He reveals Himself, the more he conceals Himself. Humankind is prevented from realizing Divine Unity because of the ego, which considers itself self-sufficient and does not submit to the Divine. The doctrine of fana (annihilation) is a logical consequence of this philosophy. When the individual ego gets close to the Divine, there can be no two egos; the individual ego is annihilated and only the Divine exists. It is like a candle getting close to the sun. The candle no longer exists; only the light of the sun remains. Man can transcend his ego through belief and effort. The path to realizing unity of existence is through love (muhabbah) rather than through knowledge (maarifah). Thus love of God, and love of fellow man, becomes a key element in sufi practice. Sufi masters know the path to Divine Knowledge, called a tareeqah, and a novice learns the secrets of the path by becoming a murid (one who desires



knowledge, disciple) of the master. The presence of sufi masters is animated by baraka (blessing), which has been transmitted to them by a silsilah (chain of transmission) going back to the Prophet. Through the centuries, this doctrine has been a centerpiece of sufi belief. Besides Ibn al Arabi, the other leading exponents of this school were the Persian al Bistami (d. 874) and the Egyptian Ibn Ataullah (d.1309).



Emperor Akbar found an echo of the doctrine of fana in the Advaita Vedanta of the Hindus. Akbar's son Jehangir is known to have studied the Advaita under a leading Hindu master. The Great Moghul saw in the correspondence between sufi thought and the Vedantas the possibility of opening up the embrace of Islam to Hindus by accepting them as people of the Book. Their books were "lost" but the inner kernel of spirituality had remained. This was a masterstroke by a consummate statesman who hoped by this move to at once consolidate the empire and give it a solid foundation by establishing the legitimacy of his rule with all the peoples of his vast realm. He achieved this through his marriage to Rajput princesses, who became mothers and grandmothers of successive emperors. The Rajputs responded by showing their loyalty to the Moghuls until the waning years of the empire. Indeed, it may justifiably be argued that Akbar's Empire was a Moghul-Rajput confederacy. His son Jehangir introduced Persian elements into it through his marriage to Noor Jehan, while his

grandson, Emperor Shah Jehan, achieved a total synthesis of the art, architecture and culture of India with that of Persia and Central Asia.

Akbar was a product of sufic Islam that dominated, and still dominates, Asia. The sufis, while accepting the Shariah to be the fundamental platform of religion, consider the obligations of Fiqh to be an outer kernel, which has to be penetrated to reach the inward spirituality of religion. Without the Shariah, there is no religion. But without its spiritual dimension, religion itself becomes a litany of do's and don'ts. In India and Pakistan, the great sufis of the Chishti order found a sympathetic chord among the Hindus by adopting a musical rendering for their sessions of dhikr (recitation of the Name of God) and presenting sufi doctrines in a manner that the Hindu mind could at once identify with. It was this spiritual thrust of Islam that converted many millions of Hindus in the subcontinent. The conversion cut across all classes and castes, the Brahmans as well as the warriors, the peasants as well as the untouchables. Conversion was not, as some western writers assume, confined to the lower castes among Hindus. Families often split, with one brother accepting Islam through the baraka of a sufi master, while the other remained a Hindu. In slow measures, over the centuries, Islam became a major religion of Hindustan, and it remains so today.

The historical process through which the people of Hindustan accepted Islam was different from the processes through which the Persians and the Egyptians (for instance) became Muslim. The initial conversion of the Arabs was through exposure to the pristine religion of the Prophet and his Companions. The faith was diffused through Persia and Egypt early in the Umayyad period and had a heavy linguistic, legal and cultural content from Arabia. Islam entered the subcontinent five hundred years after it entered Persia and Egypt. Its content was primarily spiritual. The legal content entered later. In the interaction between Islam and Hinduism, the cultures of Central Asia and Persia fused with those of India. It gave birth to new languages, and shaped a composite culture, much as happened in the Sahel of East Africa where a rich Swahili culture emerged from a fusion of African, Arab and Persian elements.

The great sufis were fully alert to the risks in the idea of Wahdat al Wajud. The doctrine of fana carries with it the possibility of shirk (association of partners with God), by proposing that the Creator and the created are on the same plane. This is totally unacceptable in Islam in which

the Absolute Unity and Transcendence of the Creator is inviolate. To overcome these objections, clarifications of tasawwuf were developed in the classic age of Islamic history. As early as the 10th century, Al Junayad (d. 910) of Baghdad formulated the doctrine of Wahdat as Shahada (Unity of Witness). In the self-sustained eloquence of the Qur'an, Shahada is a powerful term. It means at once "to witness", "to recognize", "to see", "to find", "to be conscious", "to acknowledge through speech", and "to sacrifice". When a person accepts Islam, he takes the Shahada. When a person becomes a martyr in the path of God, it is said that he has tasted the Shahada. It is only the beauty and power of Qur'anic language that makes possible the immediate synchronization of thought and deed. Shahada has two parts to it: "There is no deity but Allah, and Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah". The first part at once frees human consciousness from bondage to any deity, and tethers it solidly to God. The second part makes the consciousness of God accessible through revelation brought by Prophet Muhammed.

The doctrine of Wahdat as Shahada states that humankind is conscious of the Unity of the Divine. The apparent diversity in creation is deceptive; there is the invisible power of the Creator in every creation. Humans can gain cognizance of this Unity through doctrine and through training. This apparent difference between cognition and union is crucial to maintaining the transcendence of God. The Creator and the created are not on the same plane. While the doctrine of Wahdat al Wajud can throw a person into the vast ocean of Divine Love, in which he/she may drown, the doctrine of Wahdat as Shahada throws a life raft so that even the uninitiated can swim. The doctrine of Wahdat as Shahada remained dormant for centuries. It was the doctrine of Wahdat al Wajud that was accepted and practiced by the sufis. This was so at the time of Emperor Akbar.

Akbar's religious initiatives produced whirlpools of intellectual activity in India. The orthodox were convinced that the purity of faith was in peril. Some of the practices that the ulema found objectionable included the emperor offering his darshan (Hindustani, to appear, to show oneself) to his subjects from a balcony at sunrise (a practice borrowed from the Persians), inscription of "Allah u Akbar" on medallions that were offered to his murids (those who sought spiritual guidance from him), and even his

marriages to Hindu ladies. They considered these practices to be inconsistent with their view of Islam.

The response of the orthodox ulema and their interactions with the emperors determined the shape of Indian history, and ultimately that of global Islamic history. Ironically, the most determined resistance came from a sufi order, the Naqshbandi that grew roots in Hindustan during the reign of Akbar. Khwaja Baqi Billah, one of the Naqshbandi shaykhs, was born in Kabul in 1563, and from there migrated first to Lahore and then to Delhi. Dissatisfied with some of the practices introduced in the court, he interacted with court elements that sought to replace Akbar. It was at the instigation of these dissidents that Akbar's brother Mirza Hakim invaded Lahore (1581), an event that brought the Great Moghul to Lahore and resulted in his conquest of Kashmir, Sindh, Baluchistan and southern Afghanistan. Khwaja Baqi Billah passed away in 1603. It was his disciple, Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi (1564-1624), who had a profound impact on Islamic thought, not just in India-Pakistan, but also in the entire Islamic world.

Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi was born into a family of Hanafi scholars, and was initiated into the Naqshbandi order at Delhi in 1599. Through his lectures, his writings, and his contacts with Emperor Jehangir (1605-1627), he deeply influenced social and political developments in India. His writings suggest the tradition of Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328) of Damascus, and Imam Hanbal (780-855) of Baghdad, and he anticipates Shaykh Abdul Wahhab (1703-1787) of Arabia by more than a hundred years. Shaykh Ahmed was opposed to any form of innovation in religion and taught that religion should follow the simplicity and rigor of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. He was anguished at disrespect shown to Prophet Muhammed as had happened when the Jesuit priests from Goa presented their religion at the imperial court in Fatehpur Sikri. He was distraught at the aggressiveness with which non-Muslims propagated their faiths, while the orthodox Muslims were constrained in implementing their practices. He wrote to the leading Moghul courtiers, as well as to the leading ulema of the age in India and in the Ottoman Empire, expounding his views on orthodoxy. These writings, *Maktubat-I-Iman-I-Rabbani*, have been translated into Turkish, Farsi, and Urdu, and have influenced Muslims the world over. Later historians termed his movement *Mujaddidiya*. Shaykh Ahmed elaborated and consolidated the principles of *Wahdat as Shahada* as a counterpoint to

extreme interpretations of Wahdat al Wajud. So pre-eminent is the position of Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi among the ulema that he is referred to as Mujaddid al Alf e Thani (Renewer of the Second Millennium).

Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi was the first of three great Muslim thinkers of the subcontinent. The other two were Shah Waliullah (d. 1762) of Delhi, and Muhammed Iqbal of Lahore (d.1938). Both Shaykh Ahmed and Shah Waliullah came from sufi backgrounds and both are universally recognized as mujaddids (first rank scholars of Shariah, Fiqh and Sunnah who are qualified to reform religious practices). The eloquent poetry of Muhammed Iqbal of Lahore (1873-1938) echoes the legacy of tasawwuf left by Shaykh Ahmed and Shah Waliullah, although Iqbal went further than any of his predecessors in asserting the free will of man and its responsibility for noble action. In this respect, Iqbal stands at the confluence of the Asharite and the Mu'tazilite Schools, where the doctrines of qida (predestination) and qadr (free will) meet. The profound religious thoughts of these reformers require a separate volume.

Here, we are concerned more with their social and political thoughts, and their impact on the history of the subcontinent.

There is a common thread in their approach to Muslim interactions with the largely non-Muslim populations of South Asia. Shaykh Ahmed took exception to Akbar's initiatives for co-union with the Hindus. Perhaps it was a reaction to the Vaishanava Hindu revival in northern India at the time, or perhaps it was the deeply felt conviction of the shaykh that the future of Islam lay in strict adherence to the Sunni tradition. Some of his views were implemented during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) with disastrous consequences for the Moghul Empire. Aurangzeb befriended Shaykh Muhammed Maasum, son and successor to Shaykh Ahmed, while Shaykh Saifuddin, his grandson, lived at the court of Aurangzeb in Delhi.

Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi's political leanings can also be seen in Shah Waliullah, one of the most eminent of Islamic scholars produced by India. In 1761, as the Marathas advanced towards the Punjab, and briefly occupied Lahore (1760), it was the forceful plea of Shah Waliullah, which invited Ahmed Shah Abdali of Kabul to intervene. The bitterly fought Battle of Panipat (1761), destroyed Maratha power in the north, and confined it to central India. More than a hundred and fifty years later, another profound thinker, Muhammed Iqbal, reflected on the apparent diversity of Hindu-

Muslim ways of life, and advanced the idea of a separate state for Muslims —Pakistan.

The history of the subcontinent shows that Akbar's attempts did not succeed. Muslim India remained ambivalent about his initiatives. Sunni Islam embraced the orthodoxy of Aurangzeb. The Shi'as maintained their exclusiveness. The Hindus and the Muslims both took aggressive positions. The Sikhs, who started out bridging the gap between Muslims and Hindus, ended up fighting them both. The partition of the subcontinent in 1947, and its gory aftermath in which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs indulged in sustained orgies of mutual slaughter, was a political and social acknowledgement of this failure.

It is instructive to compare the achievements of Emperor Akbar with those of Queen Elizabeth I of England. The two were contemporaries. Akbar ruled from 1556 to 1605, while Elizabeth I ruled from 1559 to 1603. Both had inherited kingdoms that were weak and divided. When Akbar ascended the throne, his control hardly extended beyond Delhi and Agra. When he died in 1603, the empire embraced more than a million square miles and had become one of the most powerful empires in the world. When Elizabeth ascended the English throne, England was a marginal state in Europe and the object of intrigues by Spain and France. Scotland was at war with England. Elizabeth consolidated the United Kingdom, defeated the Spanish Armada and took England out of the orbit of Rome. When she died in 1603, England was the most powerful state in Western Europe. Akbar's dominions were far more extensive than those of Elizabeth, and had a population ten times that of England. But Akbar was a king-Emperor on the mighty landmass of South Asia. He made no attempt to build a strong navy. The material for building ships was available in Bengal as well as in Gujrat. The technology was available to them from the Ottoman Turks and from the Chinese. But as strong as they were on land, they surrendered the Indian Ocean to the Europeans. During the height of Akbar's power, pilgrims to Mecca and traders to East Africa had to have their papers stamped by the Portuguese for safe conduct. In the year 1600, even while Akbar was consolidating his empire and Hindustan was headed towards a period of dazzling prosperity, the East India Company was granted a charter by Elizabeth I. Two hundred years later, when history hurled England and India into a fateful embrace, it was the lapse of the Great Moghuls to build

a navy and control the Indian Ocean that made the difference, and the Company triumphed over the Rajas and Nawabs who had inherited the Empire.

The system of mansabs instituted by Akbar, while it served the empire during its period of expansion, proved to be a drag on the treasury when decay set in. In the twentieth century, it proved to be an impediment to modernization in both India and Pakistan. Third, the empire lagged behind Europe in the diffusion of knowledge and technology. The printing press, which was introduced into Europe in 1415, made possible the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The printing press was not introduced into the Moghul territories until the 18th century. Technology and innovation suffered, while wealth and power became the focus of court life. India did not produce a Newton or Galileo or Kepler. Fourth, the Moghuls (and the Ottomans and the Safavids) knew far less about the Europeans than the Europeans knew about them. Indian explorers did not travel through Europe to learn about the “Firangis” who were increasingly active on their shores. Indian exclusiveness, Hindu and Muslim alike, acted as a barrier to correct information and knowledge about these traders from far-away lands. So, when the decisive confrontation came, faulty intelligence did the Indians in, while the Europeans took full advantage of the knowledge they had about Indian court intrigues and societal fissures.

Akbar’s greatest contribution to Islamic history was his extension of the framework for interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Until his reign, Sultans and ulema alike had divided the world into two neat little compartments, Dar ul Islam and Dar ul Harab. Dar ul Islam was where the Sultans reigned, and the non-Muslims paid jizya in return for military protection as Dhimmis (protected minorities). Dar ul Harab was where the non-Muslims ruled, and conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims were unavoidable. Religious obligations that were binding on all believers in Dar ul Islam, were not necessarily binding in Dar ul Harab. Akbar, the Great Moghul, added a third dimension to this bi-polar world. This was the dimension of co-union, in which the definition of People of the Book received the maximum latitude, the meaning of Islam as Deen ul Fitra (pristine and natural faith of all humans) was implemented, and Islam extended its loving hand to all mankind. Few grasped the vision of the Great Moghul. They were looking at the rainbow through a prism that

allowed a single wavelength of light; the colors of the rainbow were lost to them. Akbar's social, political and religious activism fell by the wayside, and history lost track of the lofty horizons shown by the Great Moghul. It chose instead narrow and sinuous alleys.



## **The Battle of Lepanto**

In the last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, three critical events had a decisive impact on the course of Islamic history. One was the Battle of Lepanto (1571) fought off the coast of Greece in which the combined navies of the Vatican, Venice and Spain managed to stop the Ottoman navy, slowing the Ottoman advance to the west and denying them access to the Atlantic Ocean and the Americas. The second was the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578) in which the Moroccan army crushed Portuguese invaders in North Africa, shattering Christian ambitions to conquer and colonize the Maghrib. The third was the Moroccan invasion of the Songhay Empire (1592), which destroyed Timbaktu and other major trade centers along the Niger River, contributed to the political disintegration of West Africa, and facilitated increased slave trade to America.

The key to understanding these events lies, once again, in the social and political disintegration of Muslim North Africa after the dissolution of the Al Muhaddith Empire. Muslim Spain was not the only object of Christian Iberian Crusades. Sensing a political vacuum in the Maghrib, and taking advantage of the mutual warfare among the local emirs of Morocco (the Merinides), Algeria (the Zayyanids), and Tunisia (the Hafsids), both Portugal and Castile moved to occupy important strategic posts along the coast of Africa. In this effort, they were helped by the naval power of Venice and Genoa. Not that the Christians were contemplating a conquest of the Maghrib at this time. As yet, they did not possess the superiority in organization and arms necessary for an outright conquest. Moreover, there were internal rivalries among the Christians themselves, in particular between Portugal and Castile, precluding a sustained onslaught on North Africa.

In 1355, Tripoli was attacked and briefly occupied by Genoa. In 1390, a combined French and Genoese force invaded the ancient city of Mahdiya. In 1399, Castile occupied Tetuan in Morocco. In 1415, the strategic harbor of Ceuta on the Straits of Gibraltar fell to the Portuguese who continued their advance along the Atlantic coast occupying the strategic port of Al

Qasr in 1458. By 1470, Tangiers was under Portuguese control. Trade routes between North Africa and southern Europe were now firmly in Christian hands.

The union of Castile and Aragon under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the conquest of Granada (1492), removed the last hurdle in the way of Spanish expansion. Flush from their victory, and expulsion of the Jews (1492) and Muslims (1502) alike, the Spaniards expanded their possessions in the Mediterranean. The discovery of America (1492), and the subsequent loot from the Aztec, Mayan and Inca empires, made Spain a world power. The Popes acted as powerbrokers in medieval Europe, and they brought about a reconciliation between Spain and Portugal. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI drew an arbitrary line around the globe, dividing up the world between Spain and Portugal, for each to conquer and bring under the fold of Christianity.

The military machine of the Iberian Christians had been perfected during their protracted struggle with the Muslims. Now it was let loose on the rest of the world. There followed a general thrust of the western Crusades aimed at the total conquest of the Maghrib. In 1505, Mars al Kabir (Algeria) fell to the Spanish. Oran (Algeria) fell in 1509. Bogie (Tunisia) was captured in 1510. Tripoli (Libya) was destroyed in 1511. Tlemcen became a Spanish protectorate in 1512. Meanwhile, the Portuguese moved along the western coast of Morocco. Agadir was occupied in 1505. Converted into a strong fortress named Santa Cruz, it became a powerful base for further expansion. In 1507, Safi was occupied. In 1513, Azemour fell. By 1515, the Portuguese controlled the entire coastline of West Africa, from Morocco to the Horn. The bases along this coast served as an anchor point for their further expansion around the coast of Africa and into the Indian Ocean. They also served as shipping centers for the Atlantic slave trade, which now began to gather momentum.

The global tide of Portuguese and Spanish expansion took place precisely at a time when the Islamic world was in convulsion. This was the period during which the great dynasties of the Safavids (1501) and the Moghuls (1526) were founded and the Ottomans were consolidating their power. The Battle of Chaldiran between the Safavids and the Ottomans was fought in 1514, and 1517 was the year when the Ottomans captured Egypt from the Mamlukes. It was not until 1526 that the Ottomans, the Safavids and the

Moghuls finally settled down and started the process of global resistance to Portuguese and Spanish aggression.

By 1530 the Spaniards had conquered most of the trading outposts on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Tripoli (Libya) and Malta fell to the Spaniards who handed them over to the Knights of St. John to garrison and hold. The Spanish were not alone in their thrust into Muslim territories. Venice, Genoa and the Vatican were equally active. At stake were not only the trade routes of the Mediterranean but also the very soul of North Africa. In 1532, the Genoese captured Coron in the Adriatic. Sulaiman the Magnificent (1520-1565), the Ottoman Sultan, could not disregard this challenge. As the Caliph, he was duty bound to protect Muslims no matter where they lived.

Sulaiman ordered Ibrahim Pasha, grand vizier of the Caliphate, to upgrade the Ottoman fleet. Ibrahim was in Egypt, reorganizing the administration of that province. He was a man of extraordinary abilities whose legacy sustained the Ottoman administrative machinery until the 19th century. The Ottoman navy was already a force to be reckoned with, thanks to the initiatives taken by Sultan Selim I. Ibrahim Pasha proceeded to build on that foundation. Timber for shipbuilding was plentiful in Lebanon. There were first-rate harbors in Turkey, Egypt and Syria. What was needed was leadership and trained manpower for the sea. This he found on the coast of North Africa.

As the Christian powers of Spain, Venice and Genoa monopolized the Mediterranean trade (1500-1530), the North Africans increasingly turned to piracy. Rich bounty was available from Genoese ships in the Mediterranean as well as Spanish ships in the Atlantic carrying the loot from the Americas to Spain. The North Africans—as well as the English—attacked these ships for their booty. The skills and the art of the seas were perfected in the process.

Ibrahim Pasha convinced Sulaiman the Magnificent to invite these captains of the sea to Istanbul and press them into the service of the Caliphate. One of these captains was Khairuddin of Algiers, who was amongst the ablest admirals of the age. Khairuddin was made the admiral of the empire. Within a span of five years, he changed the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean. In 1534, he recaptured Tunis from the Spanish.

There began an historic struggle between Spain and the Ottomans for control of North Africa. The question was whether the Maghrib would remain Muslim or be ceded, as Spain had been, to the Christians. The shaykhs in Tunisia and the emirs of the old Hafsid dynasty resisted Ottoman rule because it meant a loss of their privileged position. They preferred the Christian Spaniards to the Muslim Turks. With the connivance of the shaykhs and the emirs, the Spanish took Tunis in 1535, reinstalling the old Hafsid ruler, Hassan. In retaliation, Khairuddin raided the coast of Valencia (1536) in Spain. In 1537, he captured the Venetian island of Corfu and Otranto in southern Italy where he established an Ottoman base. Morea and the islands in the Adriatic Sea followed. With the Turks at the doorsteps of Rome, panic set in. Pope Paul III organized a combined armada of the principal Christian sea powers to resist the Ottomans. In 1538, at the Battle of Prevesa, the Turks destroyed this armada, consisting of the navies of Venice and the Vatican. The issue was settled for the time being. For thirty-two years thereafter, from 1538 to 1570, Ottoman power in the eastern Mediterranean was supreme.

The focus now shifted to the western Mediterranean. Charles V, Emperor of Spain struck at Algeria in 1541, wreaking havoc on the coastal cities. In turn, Khairuddin took Taranto in Italy in 1541, forcing Venice to sue for peace. Khairuddin died in 1546, leaving behind a large cadre of trained admirals including the celebrated Piri Rais. Piri Rais was a consummate seaman who combined in his person outstanding organizational abilities with a superb understanding of sea power. A map of the Atlantic produced by Piri Rais in 1561, shows the coasts of West Africa, Europe and Brazil in such detail and such accuracy that it would meet the requirements of modern day cartography.

Tripoli in Libya, and the island of Malta, were keys to the trade routes in the Mediterranean. Since 1530, Spain had occupied Malta and had delegated the task of defending it to the Knights of St. John. These Knights acted as pirates, wreaking havoc on Muslim ships and pilgrims on their way to hajj. In 1551, one of Piri Rais's admirals, Torgud Rais, reclaimed Tripoli, throwing out the knights of St. John. In Spain, meanwhile, Phillip II had succeeded Charles V. The Spaniards mustered a powerful fleet and moved against the Ottomans. Admiral Piyali Pasha routed and destroyed this fleet at Djerba in 1561. Piri Rais followed up with a siege of Malta in 1565, but

the effort was not successful. Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent passed away the following year (1565). He had made Ottoman power the dominant land power in Europe and almost realized his goal to make the Ottoman navy the dominant navy in the world.

The struggle between the Ottoman Caliphate and the Christian powers of Spain and Portugal had now become global. Moroccan, French and English ships routinely intercepted Spanish ships carrying the loot from the Mayan, Aztec and Inca civilizations of America. In the Mediterranean, the Ottomans faced the combined naval power of Spain, Italy and the Vatican. In the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Ottoman navy took on the Portuguese. Battles were fought as far west as Algiers (Algeria) and as far east as Diu (India). After Sulaiman, Selim II (1566-1574) continued to challenge the naval power of Spain, Portugal and Venice. In 1571 Cyprus was captured from Venice. The Ottomans proceeded to lay siege to the island of Malta. But the defending garrison withstood the assault. The successful resistance encouraged the European powers. Urged by Pope Pius V, the combined navies of Spain, Venice and the Vatican joined battle. On October 7, 1571, the Christian navies squared off against the powerful Ottoman navy at Lepanto, off the coast of Greece. Losses were heavy on both sides but the Christian navies had the upper hand. The remnant of the Ottoman navy was forced to withdraw to Istanbul.

The Battle of Lepanto was a benchmark in world affairs. It broke the naval initiative of the Ottomans. Combined with the unfolding events in Morocco where the Sa'adids successfully spurned the Ottoman advances, it confined Turkish naval power to the eastern Mediterranean. The Ottomans would no longer be a credible threat in the western Mediterranean or the Atlantic. In time, the Dutch and the British would displace the Iberian powers. Before the Battle of Lepanto, the odds were even for a Muslim penetration of the Atlantic. After Lepanto, these odds disappeared. The road to America was controlled by Spain and Portugal. American history would henceforth be determined by the interaction of Europe with the New World.

The Ottomans did make a supreme effort to rebuild their navy. Within a year, the Turkish navy was back in action. In 1572, the Turkish admiral Uluj Pasha held off a combined assault by the European navies. Meanwhile, taking advantage of a respite from Turkish pressure, Spain occupied Tunis (1571). But the Ottomans retook it for good the following year. Thereafter,

Tunisia was to remain in the Muslim camp until the colonial period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1573 Venice sued for peace and agreed to cede Cyprus and make a large payment as war indemnities. By 1585, the entire coast of North Africa from Tunisia to western Algeria was firmly in Turkish hands.

Thus ended the Spanish attempt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to conquer and colonize North Africa. It had started as a spillover of the conquest of Granada under Isabella and Ferdinand. It ended in failure because the Ottoman navy proved to be just strong enough to frustrate their designs. However, the Battle of Lepanto ensured that Ottoman naval power would be contained within the eastern Mediterranean. The Atlantic Ocean, and America, would belong to the West Europeans.

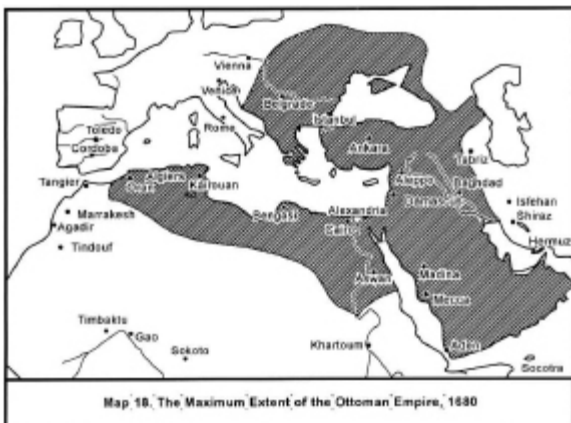
## The Second Siege of Vienna

The rise and fall of societies, nations and civilizations does not take place overnight. Barring natural calamities or invasions, the process takes place over generations. Critical events are like flashes in the panorama of history that show up the stresses built up in societies over a period of time. An observer living in Istanbul in the year 1683 would have been awed by the expanse of the Ottoman Empire. Extending over three continents, it was by far the largest land empire in the world. In Europe, it extended to the very gates of Vienna, and included Hungary, Romania, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, and parts of Poland, Ukraine and Russia. In Asia, it included Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf region, Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Palestine, Israel and Lebanon. From the Suez area, it extended over North Africa through Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. The eastern Mediterranean was an Ottoman preserve. Only Sa'adid Morocco, with its capital at Marrakesh, separated the Ottoman Empire from the Atlantic Ocean and America. The world of Islam—with the exception of Safavid Persia—recognized its claim to the Caliphate. Its embassies were honored in Moghul India and in the Emirates of the Sudan and of East Africa. European monarchs eagerly sought trade and commerce with the realm of the Sultan. Ottoman ships plied the Indian Ocean, and carried goods and guns to places as far away as the Straits of Malacca. Its capital, Istanbul, was the largest cosmopolitan city in the world with a population approaching a million. Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Jews, and

Armenians lived peacefully together, each governed by their own religious code. Freedom of religion was guaranteed. The Empire, with extensive agricultural lands in Rumilia (European Turkey), Iraq, Syria and Egypt, was divided into 32 provinces, each with an appointed governor (pasha or beg), with a rank commensurate with his position. Some of the provinces were grouped under a governor-general (beglerbeg). In turn, each province was divided into districts (sanjaks) administered by a sanjakhbey who had the additional responsibility of supplying a prescribed number of

troops to the governor in times of war. Administrative and military functions were thus combined at the local level, leading to efficient governance. The empire lay across the main east-west and north-south trade routes. External trade with Persia and India to the east, and the Italian city-states to the west was brisk. In North Africa, caravan routes cut across the Sahara and carried on a thriving trade with the states of the Sudan. Istanbul, Alexandria, Algiers, Smyrna, Aleppo, Adrianopole, Basra and Yemen were thriving trade centers. Tax revenues were derived from agriculture and trade. Land was owned by the state and was leased to peasants and officers of the army who were required to raise horses and supply soldiers (sipahis) in proportion to the land allocated to them. Crafts were organized into guilds. Members of the guilds were often associated with local sufi zawiyas. The system ensured that the craftsmen were represented both in the economic and the social milieu of society.

The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic State governed by the Shariah. Although the Ottomans followed the Hanafi Fiqh, all four of the Sunni Schools of Fiqh enjoyed equal weight before the law. Even with their adversaries, the Safavids of Persia, who practiced the Ithna Ashari Fiqh, the Ottomans agreed on the principles of adl (justice) and ihsan (noble work). The Grand Mufti of Istanbul carried the title of Shaykh ul Islam, and was a powerful man in the Empire, although he held that position only at the pleasure of the Sultan. The mufti's consent was required on important matters of legislation, including a declaration of war. The kadis performed the administration of justice at the local levels. Religious endowments, known as awqaf, maintained schools, roads, canals and other





public works. In this function, the role of the awqaf was supplemented by the work of the sufi zawiyas.

The Empire was held together by the army, an institution that had enjoyed the highest prestige since the early days of the ghazis of Rum. Since the reign of Bayazid I (d.1402), the standing army was composed of young men who were requisitioned from the conquered territories. These men, brought into Ottoman territories as boys, were trained in the arts of war, exposed to Islamic teachings, and inducted into the army. These were the janissars, who constituted the most efficient fighting machine in Europe for over three centuries. In 1683, the core of the standing army of janissars had approximately 120,000 men. This standing army was supplemented at times of war by sipahis provided by the provincial governors. Each sipahi was obligated to provide his own horse and armament, the expenses for which were offset from revenues derived from land allocated to him. There were more than 100,000 sipahis in the empire. In addition, the Tatars of Crimea supplied 30,000 troops when called upon to do so.

Sulaiman the Magnificent (d.1565) had endowed the Empire with the institutions that were to serve the Ottomans well into the following century. Under his successors these institutions had been allowed to decay, so that by 1683 the vast Empire was like an old oak tree, which was rotted from within. Under the façade of its outward expanse there were structural and technological weaknesses that were soon to surface and cause a galactic regression of its boundaries. The principal reason for this weakness lay in the structure of the Ottoman enterprise. The empire was like an inverted pyramid standing on its head. The efficiency of this structure depended on the capability of the Sultan. Under capable and far-sighted Sultans, such as Sulaiman, the Empire prospered. When the Sultan was incompetent, or had no inclination to govern, corruption set in.

In the hundred years following the death of Sulaiman the Magnificent, few Sultans, with the possible exception of Murad IV (1623-1640), demonstrated effective skills and capabilities. They spent more time in the harem than paying attention to affairs of the state. The harem itself emerged as a center of power wherein the mother of the Sultan and the Sultan's consorts jockeyed for power. The chief eunuch of the harem became an

intermediary between the harem and the court. Appointments to high posts were often made based on influence rather than merit. Neglect from the highest levels bred corruption. Under the circumstances, the burden of administering the Empire fell on the Grand Vizier, a position of high risk in the Empire. If the Grand Vizier was successful, he was rewarded with the highest honor and riches. If he failed, he faced execution. The process carried with it a ruthless logic. Only the most capable aspired to the office. The potential rewards were so great that the council of viziers themselves became a focus of intrigue and influence peddling.

The most important change in the Empire was a transformation of the standing army as a result of prolonged warfare with Persia and the Christian powers of Europe. Naval warfare in the eastern Mediterranean against the combined navies of Venice, Spain and the Vatican took a heavy toll at the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Naval engagements against the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean were ongoing and inconclusive. The campaigns in North Africa (1572-1578) against the armies of Charles V were prolonged and arduous. The intermittent war with

Safavid Persia over the control of Azerbaijan and Iraq (1585-1610) was bloody. To the north, the Russians started a new front on the River Volga. The 13-year war with Austria (1593-1606) for control of Hungary brought no additional gains. These conflicts imposed an enormous strain on resources of men and material. The supply of young men from Albania and the conquered territories for induction into the janissars was insufficient to meet this demand. Up until that time, young men who were born into Muslim families were precluded from entry into the janissar corps. The strain of continued war and the losses sustained therein made the Ottomans change this policy. Native born Muslims were inducted into the janissar corps for the first time. This had a two-fold impact. First, it increased the size of the standing army, adding to the burden on the treasury. Second, the old guard resented the introduction of the new recruits, and morale suffered.

The financial strain of enlarging and maintaining the army was compounded by the influx of silver from America. Starting with the year 1519, the Spanish transported enormous quantities of the metal from Mexico to Madrid. From there, the silver found its way into France, England, Italy and the Ottoman Empire. Simultaneous discoveries (1518) of silver mines in Germany added to the flood of this precious metal on the

continent. As the currencies of Europe were based on silver, the infusion of so much silver lowered the value of the currencies. Inflation became endemic. The Ottoman soldiers and administrative personnel, unable to feed their families on fixed incomes, demanded an increase in pay. In 1589, the janissars rose in rebellion. The Ottomans responded by devaluing their currency and increasing taxation on the peasants. The increased taxation, in turn, caused an increase in migration from the villages to the urban centers, with resultant widespread dislocation in agriculture. A large number of these vagrants joined the auxiliary troops of the Sultan where their lack of discipline caused additional problems. The breakdown in the morale of the janissars reduced their fighting efficiency. Often, they made up for their reduced purchasing power by imposing themselves on the peasants and helping themselves to their granary and their fodder. A breakdown in discipline made them pawns in the competing centers of power in the harem and the council of viziers.

A combination of these adverse circumstances explains the Ottoman losses to the Safavids in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Iraq (1593-1616). Sultan Murad IV, who demonstrated an exceptional zeal for affairs of state, and a capability, intelligence and dedication unmatched since Sultan Sulaiman, arrested the slide towards disintegration. The first nine years of his reign were spent in consolidating his position within the court and eliminating competing centers of power. Taking personal charge of state affairs in 1632, he moved decisively, first to eliminate rebellious elements in the provinces, and then to recapture Tabriz (1635) and Baghdad (1638), which had fallen to the Safavids. A prolonged war with Persia ensued, at the end of which Baghdad remained in Ottomans hands but Tabriz reverted to Safavid (1639) control. By the Treaty of Zuhab (1639), the border between Anatolia and Persia was demarcated, and it corresponds roughly to the present boundaries between Turkey and Persia. To protect the peasants and the merchants from brigands, Sultan Murad issued the Adalat Nameh (Code of Justice), which served as a blueprint for justice in the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century. Sultan Murad passed away in 1640.

There were no major hostilities with the European powers during the reign of Sultan Murad IV. The Europeans were fighting among themselves during the thirty-year war (1618-1648), and had neither the will nor the resources to start a conflict with the Ottomans. However, the situation

changed soon after the death of Murad. The Knights of St. John, based in Malta, regularly raided the coasts of Syria and North Africa. The island of Crete, controlled by Venice, served as their base. In 1645, an Ottoman fleet set sail for Crete to drive them out. It was to be the start of a long war in which the two most powerful navies of the eastern Mediterranean, those of the Ottomans and the Venetians, tested their mettle against each other. The war lasted until 1669 when Venice finally ceded Crete to the Ottomans.

In Istanbul, meanwhile, the process of disintegration that was evident before Murad IV was set in motion again after his death. His successor, Ibrahim (1640-1648), was weak, vacillating, and showed little inclination to govern. Intrigues in the harem and the court surfaced again. The Grand Vizier, Mustafa Pasha, tried to arrest the centrifugal forces. He reduced the size of the standing army, paid soldiers and bureaucrats alike on time, reduced taxes on peasants, and put the currency on a solid footing. His reforms evoked the jealousy of the harem and the court alike. Mustafa Pasha was framed, deposed and executed in 1644. The situation in the capital went from bad to worse, and in 1648, the janissars rebelled, dethroned and executed Sultan Ibrahim. Mehmet IV, then a boy of seven, ascended the throne. Since he was too young to rule, the Grand Vizier, Mehmet Pasha, managed the affairs of state. The job was always a precarious one and tenure depended on performance. In 1649, when the Turkish navy suffered reverses in their naval engagements against the Venetians in the Aegean Sea, Mehmet Pasha was dismissed and executed. His successor, Grand Vizier Ibshir Pasha was equally frustrated by palace intrigue from reforming the administration. He too was executed in 1655 and Kurpulu Mehmet Pasha was appointed the Grand Vizier. Mehmet Pasha was an able, intelligent, determined and experienced administrator. It was he who guided the ship of state while Sultan Mehmet IV was busy with the harem and hunting. Mehmet purged the administration of incompetent personnel, fostered discipline in the army, eliminated extortion, punished greedy tax collectors, and ruthlessly put down any rebellion. He reorganized the navy and ordered it to lift the blockade of Istanbul that the Venetians had imposed. One by one, the islands of the Aegean that had been lost to Venice were won back, and Venice was forced to sue for peace. Mehmet Pasha died in 1661 and was succeeded as Grand Vizier by his son Fazil Ahmed Pasha. Fazil, a cultivated, urbane man, continued the reforms of his father. He is known in history for his encouragement of art and literature

and his policy of tolerance towards Christians, Jews and other minorities. The combined period of the two Kurpulus, Mehmet Pasha and Fazil Ahmed (1655-1676), is known as the golden age for Turkish arts. Under the two Kurpulus, the old Ottoman institutions regained their former vitality, and the empire regained its former military muscle.

It was about this time that the struggle between the Ottomans and the Hapsburgs for control of Central Europe heated up again, and was to climax with the siege of Vienna in 1683. The Grand Vizier demanded that the Hapsburgs cease their intervention in Hungary, demolish the fortresses they had built while the Ottomans had been preoccupied with internal turmoil, and resume the payment of annual tribute to the Sultan. When the demands were refused, Fazil Ahmed advanced from Buda-Pest towards Vienna (1663), and captured several key forts. The demonstration of renewed Turkish strength alarmed the Europeans. The Hapsburgs of Austria were Catholic, and they appealed to the Vatican for help. Pope Alexander VII formed a “Holy League” against the Ottomans. Venice, Genoa and the German principalities signed on. Louis XIV of France sent a contingent. Additional troops were dispatched from as far away as Portugal and Spain. The two armies met at the Battle of St. Gotthard (1664). The contest was a draw, and it ended with the Treaty of Vasvar, which reconfirmed Ottoman control of Hungary. But it also demonstrated to the Europeans that the Turks could be held at bay. To the north, Turkish armies advanced deep into the Ukraine and Poland (1672), and forced the Poles to pay tribute. Thus, for a while in the 17th century, the principal powers of eastern and central Europe, including Austria, and Poland paid tribute to the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul or to his vassals.

The battle for Hungary started again when the Treaty of Vasvar expired in 1682. Ahmed Pasha passed away in 1676, and Kara Mustafa Pasha was appointed the Grand Vizier. Capable, determined, and ambitious, he saw the manifest destiny of the Ottomans as the principal power dominating Christian Europe. The Hungarians preferred Ottoman rule to the Hapsburgs because the Protestants as well as the Orthodox Christians of Hungary enjoyed greater freedom under the Muslim Turks than they did under the Catholic Austrians. So, when Austria made a move into Hungary, Thokoly, King of Hungary, appealed to the Ottomans for help. A contingent of Turkish troops arrived, and with their help, Thokoly managed to extend his

realm in western Hungary. Trying to avoid renewed war, the Hapsburgs sent an envoy to Istanbul to negotiate an extension of the treaty of Vasvar.

Mustafa Pasha demanded the surrender of Gyor, a strong Austrian fortress located between Buda-Pest and Vienna. War became inevitable when the Austrians refused, and Mustafa Pasha advanced towards Hungary with a powerful army of over a hundred thousand, backed by a corps of artillery units. This formidable army was joined by 30,000 troops from the Crimean Tatars. The year was 1683.

Ottoman historians have debated to this day whether Grand Vizier Mustafa Pasha had Vienna as the target of this mission or whether he moved in that direction to exploit a military opportunity. They are also divided as to whether Sultan Mehmet IV knew in advance of the march on Vienna. There is general agreement only that the approved target was the great fortress of Gyor. Against the advice of some of his generals, and of his Tatar allies, Mustafa bypassed the fort of Gyor and advanced towards Vienna. He arrived at the Hapsburg capital on July 14, 1683.

Much had changed since Sulaiman the Magnificent stood at the gates of Vienna in September 1526. At that time, the Turks enjoyed overwhelming superiority in field guns and in tactics. Their cavalry was the fiercest in the world. By 1683, the Europeans had caught up with the Ottomans in metallurgy and ballistics, and their field guns were a match for the Ottomans. In tactics and discipline too, the Hapsburgs and the Germans could successfully challenge the Turks. Sultan Sulaiman had withdrawn at the early onset of winter in Central Europe after forcing the Hapsburgs to pay tribute. Grand Vizier Mustafa Pasha was determined to succeed where Sulaiman the Magnificent had failed, and to make a name for himself in history. He had arrived at the capital in mid-summer, allowing himself plenty of time for a successful siege.

The Hapsburgs were ill prepared for this invasion, believing that the Ottomans would confine their campaigns to western Hungary and retreat. Vienna was defended by only 15,000 troops. Once it became obvious that Mustafa was headed for their capital, Leopold I of Austria appealed to the European powers for help. Pope Innocent XI sent a large amount of cash, and organized a Catholic alliance. Louis XIV of France stayed aloof, but the Dukes of Bavaria and Saxony in Germany sent troops. King Sobiesky of Poland formed an alliance with the Hapsburgs and marched forth with

40,000 troops. Portugal and Spain sent contingents. The Venetians offered help as well.

What followed were a series of missteps and miscalculations on the part of the Turks, and a confluence of circumstances favorable to the Europeans. The Ottoman army arrived at the gates of Vienna in July 1683 and laid siege to it. The Crimean Tatars, together with some Turkish contingents, continued their westward advance and raided territories deep into Austria and Central Germany. Mustafa Pasha was in such a great hurry to reach the capital that he had left behind the heavy guns in the Ottoman arsenal, believing that mining would accomplish a breach of the fort. This proved to be a serious miscalculation. The walls of Vienna were too well constructed to yield to light cannon, and mining was a time consuming process. Meanwhile, King Sobiesky of Poland arrived with his troops and was joined by German contingents from Bavaria, Saxony, as well as a contingent from Lorraine. Together, this host of over 70,000 marched towards Vienna. The situation in the capital was desperate. The Ottomans had succeeded in mining the walls, and their light artillery had demolished sections of the fort. The city might have fallen to a determined assault. At this critical juncture the Ottomans made a grave tactical error in permitting the Catholic armies to cross the River Danube towards the fort. Turkish historians maintain that Mustafa Pasha had asked the Tatar Khan to guard the river, but the latter had stood by as the European troops crossed because of his personal animosity towards the Grand Vizier. Even so, Mustafa made another tactical error in trying to stem the advance of the enemy using his cavalry. The European armies were well disciplined, well led, used cannon effectively, and were fighting a holy war to defend a capital city. The battle was fought on September 12, 1683. When it was over, more than 10,000 Muslim soldiers had perished against half that number for the Christians. The Ottomans retreated, having lost their tents, their treasures, and their field guns.

This was the first major defeat suffered by the Ottoman armies at the hands of the Europeans. It proved to be as much of a disaster to the Ottomans as was the defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) for the Al Muhaddith in Spain. The Austrians followed up on their victory, advanced deep into Hungary, and pushed the Ottoman armies south of the River Danube. Sultan Mehmet IV who had idled away his time in hunting, blamed

the defeat on Kara Mustafa, and had him strangled at Belgrade (1683). There was deep dissatisfaction in the court and among the general population with Mehmet IV, and his preoccupation with hunting, in the face of the grave crisis facing the empire. Even the Shaykh ul Islam, Mufti Ali Effendi of Istanbul joined in the demand that the Emperor put his house in order (1684). When there was no response, the army marched into Istanbul, deposed and imprisoned Mehmet (1687), and installed his brother Sulaiman II on the throne.

The second siege of Vienna marks the high point of Muslim expansion in Europe. Its failure highlights the incipient weakness of Muslim armies in technology, tactics and discipline in comparison to those of the Europeans. The Ottoman retreat began about the same time as the Moghul reverses at the hands of the Marathas in India, and the Safavid losses in northern Persia to the Russians. After Vienna, the Ottomans ceased to be a threat to Europe, although the resilient Turks made recurrent efforts to reform and revitalize their institutions. A sustained counter thrust from Europe began, which was aimed initially at the Balkans and the Caucasus, but expanded over the years to North Africa and Egypt, and resulted ultimately in the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in the Great War of 1914-1918. Muslim power had passed its zenith. The hour of Europe had arrived.



# POWER SHIFTS TO EUROPE

## *Summary*

*The key to the ascent of Europe lay in the Maghrib. For five hundred years, the Muslims had bottled up Europe with the control of the Spanish Peninsula to the southwest and their thrust at the Balkans in the southeast. The Crusades in Spain succeeded in breaking this bottleneck. In the 15th century, as political disintegration overtook the Maghrib, the Crusades spilled over into North Africa. The lure of African gold, and the prospects of outflanking the Muslims and capturing “Moorish” slaves, provided incentives for continued military thrusts. By the turn of the century, Portuguese explorers had traversed the entire western coast of Africa and were doggedly pursuing a sea route to the prosperous Indian Ocean. During one such voyage, in 1492, Columbus discovered America. It was also the year when the combined forces of Castile and Aragon overwhelmed Granada, and Muslim rule disappeared from Andalus. In 1496, Vasco de Gama sailed around the tip of Africa and made his way to India. Returning at the head of a naval squadron in 1502, Vasco de Gama turned his cannons on the open cities around the rim of the Indian Ocean, devastating the trade patterns that had existed for centuries. The Portuguese consolidated their monopoly on Indian Ocean trade at the expense of Muslim traders. They overreached themselves when they tried an invasion of Morocco, and the Sa’adids decimated their land forces at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578). The Spanish picked up the pieces but they too stumbled when the English sank their armada (1588), and the naval initiative passed on to the nations of northern Europe. The Sa’adids, to raise money for their wars, invaded the Songhay Empire, destroyed the thriving trading centers along the Niger River, and contributed to social dislocations in West Africa. Meanwhile, the Atlantic slave trade gathered momentum with the introduction of sugarcane into the Americas by the*

*Spanish, and the increased need for labor on the plantations. The slave trade was captured from the Spanish, first by the Dutch, and then by the British. In the process, Africa bled, and Europe and America grew rich.*



## **The Portuguese Devastations in the Indian Ocean**

The discovery of America and the circumnavigation of Africa were logical consequences of the religious-political rivalry between the Christian powers of Iberia and the Muslim powers of North Africa. As the Maghrib disintegrated, the Christian powers of Iberia, with the cooperation of the maritime powers of Italy, consolidated their positions and projected their power far beyond the borders of the Iberian Peninsula.

Religion and profit were the principal motivations for the Portuguese-Spanish thrust. Christian fanaticism expressed itself through the Spanish Inquisition. Abu Abdallah (Boabdil), the last emir of Granada, had agreed to surrender under a comprehensive treaty, which guaranteed freedom of religion to the non-Christians. But no sooner had the ink dried on this treaty than it was abandoned. The Inquisition was let loose, first on the Jews, then on the Muslims. There was sustained resistance but it proved fruitless. Some of the Muslims hid in caves in the hills of El Pujarra near Granada to escape the Inquisition. They were hunted down and exterminated. In 1502, the Spanish monarch issued a decree to expel the Muslims.

The conflict was not confined to the Iberian Peninsula. It spilled over into North Africa. The Christian Iberians dreamed of conquering North Africa for their faith. Pope Alexander VI divided the world into two spheres of influence, one for the Portuguese and one for the Spaniards. In accordance with the Pope's edict, the Portuguese moved along the Atlantic coast, while the Spanish focused on the Mediterranean coast.

The profit motive was not far behind as a driving force. Europe had long dreamed of opening trade routes to India and East Asia. The products of Asia—spices, silk, cloth, brass work, ivory, iron—were in great demand in the Mediterranean, and the trade was highly profitable. Since the 8th

century, Muslims had controlled the trade routes to India, Sumatra, and China, and the wealth of such cities as Alexandria in Egypt and Basra in Iraq depended to a large extent on this trade. The city-states of Italy—Venice, Genoa, and Naples—bought these products in Alexandria, and sold them to the rest of Europe, making enormous profits and growing rich in the process.

The Portuguese were the first European nation to realize the dream of reaching India. They were helped in this undertaking by technology and geography. First, there were major technological advances. The winds around the coast of West Africa change direction from south to north around the Cape of Bajador. Until the second half of the 15th century, neither the Christians in western Europe nor the Muslims of the Maghrib possessed the technology to sail against the wind. This was so even though the technology was known to the Venetians and was also widely used in the Indian Ocean. The absence of such ships had prevented the people of the Maghrib from venturing further south along the coast. The Portuguese and the Spaniards acquired this technology, circa 1450, from the Venetians.

Second, the cannon made its appearance in the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. The Muslims of North Africa had learned the technology of gunpowder from the Turks and had introduced it into Spain. Now, the same technology in the hands of the Christians was turned against them.

Third, the economic and political disintegration of the Maghrib precluded any coherent Muslim response to the military challenge from the north. The Muslims of the Maghrib had lost the trade routes in the western Mediterranean (1350-1400). The Trans-Saharan trade was sporadic because of the unsettled political conditions in the region.

The emirs were in constant warfare with one another. In contrast, the consolidation of Christian Iberia steadily gathered momentum. Even though the Iberian political structure was feudal and despotic, it proved to be more cohesive than the prevailing political chaos in the Maghrib.

Fourth, historical developments and its own geography helped the Portuguese. The location of Portugal on the Atlantic seacoast gave it access to the coastline of West Africa. Portugal emerged as a unified country after the Crusades of 1236-1248, more than 200 years before Spain was unified under Ferdinand and Isabella and Granada was conquered. Political

cohesiveness gave the Portuguese a leg up on their rivals in their race to the Atlantic Ocean. Contacts with the Muslims of North Africa had taught the Iberians that there were thriving African communities south of the Sahara, where gold and ivory were plentiful. The tales of Timbaktu were heard in the soukhs (markets) of Tangier and Ceuta.

The lure of African gold beckoned Europe. If the Maghrib could be bypassed by sea, it would benefit the Iberians in their strategic military confrontation with the Muslims, and at the same time, eliminate them as middlemen in the lucrative trade with the Sudan. In both Lisbon and Madrid, the exploration of the Atlantic coast of Africa received the highest priority. The Portuguese Captain Tristao successfully crossed Cape Bajador in 1434. This was a benchmark achievement. In 1441 Portuguese ships raided the coast of southern Morocco. In 1443, the island of Tristao, later to gain notoriety in the Atlantic slave trade, was captured. In 1456, Senegal and Gambia were visited. In 1472, the Portuguese Captain Sequira reached Benin in Nigeria. Thereafter, Portuguese excursions thrust them forward in a relentless quest for the southern tip of Africa.

The route around the southern tip of Africa to the Indian Ocean was not unknown. As early as 1406, the great Chinese Muslim Admiral Zheng Yi had sailed the Indian Ocean around the Cape of Good Hope to the western coast of Africa. But he had turned around before navigating northwards to Morocco and Europe. In 1496, Vasco de Gama achieved what Admiral Zheng Yi did not. He circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope, and, guided by a Muslim sailor Ahmed ibn Majid who was a resident in East Africa, sailed with the northeasterly monsoons to reach the coast of Malabar (India).

The events of the last decade of the 15 th century, namely the conquest of Granada (1492), the discovery of America (1492), and the successful voyage around Africa (1496), released the energies of Europe. The Muslim presence in Spain had bottled up Europe for 700 years. Not only had Europe escaped the juggernaut of the Muslims, it had in turn drawn a circle around the Muslim heartland in West Asia and North Africa. It was only a matter of time before the noose would tighten. History had changed.

East Africa was a part of the wider Islamic world. The Indian Ocean was an open sea plied by Arab dhows, Indian multi-mast sails, and giant Chinese ships. The littoral cities of the ocean provided open markets for the

exchange of goods from the far-flung corners of Asia and Africa. The African seaboard carried on a brisk trade with the coasts of Arabia, Persia, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and China. Exports from East Africa included gold, ivory, cola nuts, palm oil, rhino tusks and iron ore. Imports included spices from Malabar and Indonesia, finished iron products from Bijapur, cotton goods from Bengal, silk from China and Persia, marble and incense from Arabia. As an illustration, iron ore was exported from Kilwa (Tanzania) to Gujrat and Bijapur (India) where it was smelted into iron. Al Masudi records that the Indians made excellent swords with this iron. Some of the smelted iron was exported to Basra from where it was shipped to the metal working industries of Iraq and Syria and processed into “Damascus Steel”, an alloyed product using the high temperature super plastic properties of steel.

Islam forged together a brotherhood and sisterhood in East Africa transcending the barriers of region, race and ethnicity. Trade and travel resulted in intermarriage among the people of the Indian Ocean seaboard. Malabar (India) and the Sahel (Africa) had large populations of such intermarriages. This melting pot produced a rich, cosmopolitan Islamic culture, which fused the ancient cultures of Persia and India with the energy of Africa and the doctrinal restraint of Arabia. Cities such as Dar es Salaam (doorway to peace), Shofala, Kilwa, Mombasa, Pemba, Malindi, and Mogadishu grew up with stone fortresses, paved streets, great mosques and imposing palaces. Al Masudi refers to Shofala (Mozambique) as a city of gold. A new language, Swahili was born, combining Bantu grammar with Arabic and Persian vocabulary.

The cannons of the Portuguese broke the peace of Dar es Salaam. Vasco de Gama saw a thriving civilization in East Africa and western India, and what he saw whetted his appetite. As soon as he returned from India, the Portuguese drew up plans for the subjugation of East Africa and the capture of Muslim trade routes in the Indian Ocean. Historical currents favored the Portuguese. It was a period when major political realignments were taking place in the Islamic world. In Persia, Shah Ismail was busy consolidating the Safavid Empire. In Egypt, the Mamlukes were a spent force. Cairo, as the seat of the Caliphate, was unable to defend itself, let alone protect the Muslims worldwide. The Ottomans, active in Europe, had not yet firmed up their boundaries with Persia and Egypt. In India, the Lodhis were a distant

echo of the powerful Sultanate under the Khiljis. The Maghrib had just lost Granada, and was in total disarray with rampant warfare among the local emirs.

Sensing an historic window of opportunity, both Portugal and Spain moved to expand their positions around the globe between the years 1500 and 1530. Vasco de Gama returned in 1502, this time with a powerful fleet, armed with the largest cannons in the Portuguese inventory, and bombarded the city-states all along the coast of East Africa. The mandate of the Portuguese from their king was to cut the trade routes, subjugate the African trading cities and destroy “Moorish” influence. The Portuguese and the Spanish used the term Moors to refer to all Muslims, whether they were Arabs, Africans, Persians, Indians or Malays. These cities had minimal fortifications, because they had no natural enemies; their relations with the African hinterland were peaceful, and they looked with open arms to the blue ocean for free trade. So, when the Portuguese cannon boomed and rained death and destruction, the trading centers around the Indian Ocean were totally unprepared.

Vasco de Gama’s first voyage was an intelligence gathering one. He returned in 1502 at the head of a flotilla of twenty-five ships armed with the most powerful cannons in the Portuguese inventory. His first encounter with shipping in the Indian Ocean was a vessel carrying 700 returning hajjis from Mecca to India. An Indian Muslim from Malabar, Merim, owned the ship. Disregarding pleas for mercy, de Gama burned the ship with all of its occupants, women and children included. When the Portuguese arrived off the coast of Calicut, the Raja of Calicut, Manna Vikrama, sent an emissary, a Brahmin of high repute, to negotiate peace. The ambassador arrived on board the Portuguese flagship with his two sons and a nephew. De Gama cut off the hands, nose and ears of the ambassador, and had the three young men nailed to crosses. The bombardment of Calicut began in earnest, wreaking havoc on that ancient city. He then turned his attention to the ships in anchor. He treated the captured Hindus the same way he had treated the Brahmin ambassador of the Raja, cutting off their hands, noses and ears and piling them up in heaps on board his ships. But the most sadistic treatment was reserved for captured Muslims. One Khwaja Muhammed, a noted merchant from Egypt was captured, beaten, his mouth stuffed with

pig refuse, and then set afire. Such atrocities were repeated wherever the Portuguese went on the Indian coast.

The first Portuguese raids established a fortified position in East Africa. Shofala, a trading center established by Muslim merchants as early as 957, was captured. More powerful thrusts followed. In 1505, the Portuguese captain Almeida raided Kilwa and shot his way along the East African coast to Somalia, returning with a rich booty. In 1507, Bab el Mandap, at the entrance to the Red Sea fell. The Portuguese made an attempt to capture Aden (Yemen) but failed. In 1508, they appeared on the coast of India, and captured Diu and Daman. Shortly thereafter, the port of Goa was captured from Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur, who was betrayed by a renegade Adil Shahi sailor, Timoja. All of its Muslim male inhabitants were slain and the women were enslaved. The splendid port of Goa gave the Portuguese a commanding base from where to expand their operations, and it became the seat of their fledging empire in the Indian Ocean.

In 1511, Albuquerque was appointed the governor of Goa and was given command of operations in this sector. Ambitious, determined, and ruthless, Albuquerque vowed to turn the Indian Ocean into a Portuguese lake. In 1512, a powerful fleet sent from Goa arrived at the Straits of Malacca (Malaysia). Malayan resistance was valiant, determined and desperate but the greater firepower of the invaders proved decisive and Malacca fell. The control of Malacca gave the Portuguese a stranglehold on trade routes between the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific (China). In 1515, Albuquerque captured the Straits of Hormuz in Persia at the entrance to the Persian Gulf and completed his conquests by occupying Muscat and Bahrain (1516).

Within a span of fifteen years, the Portuguese had destroyed the thriving city-states of East Africa, captured strategic naval posts all along the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, occupied the entrances to both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and disrupted the trade that had flowed from India, Sumatra and China to West Asia and East Africa. Once thriving cities on the African seaboard became ghost towns. Violence, greed, enmity and ruthlessness took over trade and cooperation. Portuguese hatred of Muslims was unbounded. Wherever they landed, their first targets were the Muslims. The Inquisition was instituted in Goa against both Hindus and Muslims, and instructions were passed out by the Portuguese governor that no Muslim



was to be hired, even though the territory of Goa had been a part of the Sultanate of Bijapur, and had a large number of Muslims in it.

The global Portuguese challenge did not go unanswered. In the period 1261-1517, the Mamlukes of Egypt were the custodians of Mecca and Madina. The Caliphate resided in Cairo. The Mamlukes, as custodians of the Caliphate, were duty bound to help Muslims worldwide. When East Africa and Gujrat (India) cried for help, Mansuh al Ghalib, Mamluke Sultan of Egypt sent a powerful fleet from Yemen into the Arabian Sea, despite the fact that the Mamlukes themselves had serious financial difficulties. In 1508, this fleet defeated a strong Portuguese force off the coast of Chaul (near modern Karachi), and proceeded to lay siege to Diu (in Gujrat). The Portuguese held on; however, the Mamluke fleet was caught in a monsoon storm and had to moor at Surat, which was ruled by the Sultan of Gujrat. This episode shows that in the early part of the 16th century, there was close coordination between the Muslim states of East Africa, India and the Mamluke Caliphate in Egypt.

The battle at Diu was a turning point in history. The inability of the Mamlukes to expel the Portuguese solidified their hold on Goa, Diu and Daman. They stayed there for almost 500 years until the Indian Army ejected them in 1962.



Events in West Asia overtook this initial thrust of the Mamlukes. Following the Battle of Chaldiran (1514), the Ottoman Turks advanced into

Egypt and took Cairo (1517). The Caliphate moved to Istanbul and the responsibility for the protection of the Muslims passed on to the Ottomans.

In 1525, Sulaiman the Magnificent, Ottoman Sultan and Caliph, sent his Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha to Cairo to reorganize the administration of Egypt. One of Ibrahim Pasha's accomplishments was to energize the Egyptian (now Ottoman) navy in the Indian Ocean. In 1535, Sulaiman Pasha, Governor of Egypt, set out with a powerful fleet from Suez, drove the Portuguese from Yemen, and arriving in India, laid siege to Diu (Gujrat) in cooperation with the Sultan of Gujrat. The siege was, however, unsuccessful, and Sulaiman Pasha returned to Egypt.

The defense of the eastern trade routes took on added importance to the Ottomans when they captured Iraq and the Port of Basra (1546) from the Safavids. The Portuguese commanding the Straits of Hormuz blockaded Basra. Sulaiman the Magnificent ordered the blockade to be broken. The celebrated Admiral Piri Rais, sailed from Suez in 1551, inflicted heavy damage on the Portuguese garrisons in Hormuz, Muscat and Oman and made his way to Basra. Leaving his command in Basra, he returned the following year. However, he was unable to drive the Portuguese from Hormuz and the blockade of the Persian Gulf continued. The following year, another admiral, Ali Pasha, fought his way through the Portuguese blockade and laid siege to Diu together with the Sultan of Gujrat but had to abandon it due to a storm. Soon thereafter, Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) captured Gujrat and made Surat a principal port of export for the Moghul Empire. Akbar, although acknowledging the Ottoman Caliphate as one "in the tradition of the four rightly-guided Caliphs", had his own ideas about how to deal with the Portuguese.

The Portuguese started negotiations with fellow Christians in Ethiopia to deny the Ottoman navy access to the Red Sea. To pre-empt this possibility, the Turks occupied Masawa (Eritrea) in 1557. In 1560, a Turkish force was assembled to recapture the Straits of Malacca (Malaysia) from the Portuguese, but the effort was abandoned due to the internal political situation in Malaysia. Nonetheless, through his determined efforts, Sulaiman the Magnificent broke the back of the Portuguese blockades by the time he passed away in 1565.

The war between the Ottomans and the Portuguese for control of trade routes continued throughout the 16th century. Admiral Ali Beg sailed from

Yemen in 1580, and turning south from the coast of Somalia, raided Portuguese forts in Mombasa, Kilwa (modern Tanzania) and Malindi. In 1589, he repeated this feat again, but this time he was stopped south of Kilwa by a strong Portuguese fleet sent from Goa. This naval engagement had the far-reaching effect of preserving the East African coastlines in Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania for Muslim influence. However, the Portuguese held on to Mozambique, which became a Portuguese colony for 400 years, and an important source of slaves for shipments to Brazil.

The Portuguese threat subsided towards the end of the 16th century for four important reasons. First, the Portuguese had neither the material resources nor the manpower to monopolize the Indian Ocean trade. The limited land area of Portugal could not produce the timber required to support a large navy. By 1565, more trade flowed on Muslim ships than did on Portuguese ships, and Alexandria in Egypt was once again a flourishing trading post. Second, Portuguese trade was monopolistic, with the king of Portugal holding all the cards, and monopolies are inherently inefficient and do not survive for long. Third, the Portuguese ruling structure was feudal, with the governors beholden to the king, and little latitude for local initiative. And fourth, Ottoman resistance in the Indian Ocean broke the back of the Portuguese monopoly. The littoral empires of the Great Moghuls in India and the Safavids in Persia became so powerful that the Portuguese became no more than a nuisance. A more potent European challenge was to emerge in the following centuries, first from Holland, and then from England.

The Ottoman naval activities were global, and were not confined just to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Arrayed against the Ottomans was the combined might of Europe involving Spain, Portugal, Venice, Austria, Russia and the Vatican. In 1552, when the Russian Czar Ivan IV captured Astrakan and Kazan, Sulaiman the Magnificent ordered a fleet into the Black Sea to recapture Astrakan. Sultan Sulaiman had a grand vision to dig a canal linking the Rivers Don and Volga so that Ottoman troops could bypass the opposing Safavids in Persia, and move through the Turkoman territories around the Caspian Sea to the friendly territories of the Moghul Empire in India. This dream persisted until the First World War (1914-1918) when the Ottomans made a desperate plan to strike at the British in India through the region of the Caspian Sea and link up with the large pro-

Turkish, pro-Caliphate Muslim population of what is today Pakistan. Sulaiman's efforts were unsuccessful in 1555, and the Ottoman efforts were frustrated in 1914 by Russian advances into eastern Turkey and northern Persia.

## **The Battle of al Qasr al Kabir**

The battle of al Qasr al Kabir must rank with the great battles in world history alongside the battles of Ayn Jalut (1261), Lepanto (1571), Plassey (1757), and Stalingrad (1942). At immediate stake was the fate of Morocco. But when the battle was over, the might of Portugal had been crushed, the Portuguese king killed, and its Empire lay in shambles. Two years later, Portugal itself became a colony of Spain and remained so for more than fifty years. In turn, Spain tried to leverage the wealth it had looted from Mexico and Peru to hold onto its trade monopoly with the Americas as well as preserve the Portuguese trade with West Africa and India. Like all monopolies, this effort was doomed to failure. It attracted interlopers from England, France and Morocco.

Economics and religion both played a role in the next sequence of events. Spain appealed to England to stamp out piracy but the English throne was not responsive. Meanwhile, Pope Sixtus V authorized a Catholic Crusade against England in response to its Protestant leanings (1587). Armed with a Papal edict, and seething with resentment at continued English piracy, King Phillip II of Spain resolved to conquer England. A mighty armada was assembled under Admiral Madina Sidonia and sent into the English Channel (1588) and up the Thames River. There it was met by an English fleet under Charles Howard and was destroyed. Spain made a second attempt in 1598, but this time the ill-fated Spanish fleet was caught in a storm in the Atlantic and sank. Spain bled and its hold on global trade weakened. This opened the door for the entry of Holland and England onto the world stage.

Following the Battle of Lepanto (1571), the struggle for the control of North Africa entered a new phase involving a four-way struggle between Spain, Portugal, the Ottomans and the Sa'adids of Morocco. Spain briefly occupied Tunis, but the Turkish army reclaimed it in 1572. By 1576, the Ottomans had advanced through Algeria and had taken the ancient city of

Fez in Morocco as well as the important trading center of Tlemcen on the outskirts of the Sahara desert. The Sa'adids who wished to remain independent did not welcome this. The Sa'adid Sultan Abdulla al Ghalib conspired with the Spanish to attack Tlemcen but died before he could reach the city. Ghalib's son Muhammed became the Sultan and continued the advance. The Sa'adid court was divided between those who supported the Turks and those who sought an alliance with Spain. Two of Ghalib's brothers, Abdul Malik and Ahmed, were among those who supported a Turkish presence. Muhammed's moves to align himself with Christian Spain were unpopular with the people. Abdul Malik and Ahmed easily overthrew Muhammed with the help of the Turkish army and Abdul Malik was proclaimed the Sultan. The overthrown Muhammed Sa'adid appealed to King Phillip II of Spain for help. Phillip had his hands full with the Turks in North Africa and Europe. Realizing that he was over committed to the defense of the Italian coast as well as helping the Hapsburgs in Vienna, he declined to intervene. Muhammed Sa'adid then turned to King Sebastian of Portugal.

The Portuguese were very active on the Atlantic coast of Morocco and in West Africa. They captured the strategic port of Tangier in 1471, and used it as a base to scuttle Moroccan trade in the Mediterranean. In 1505, they captured Agadir and built the powerful fortress of Santa Cruz there. This fort commanded the entrance to the Atlantic and provided a strong base from which to terrorize the Moroccan coast. This was the first of a series of forts that the Portuguese were to build around the coast of Africa as well as in India and Malaya. The port of Safi was occupied in 1507, Azempour in 1513, and Mazagan near the ancient Al Muhaddith center of Tit in 1515. In addition, the Portuguese intervened in the politics of southern Morocco, playing off one emir against another and hastening the political disintegration already under way.

The Portuguese military activity was not confined to the political arena. Slavery was also on their agenda. Portuguese piracy along the coast was not unnoticed in Morocco. However, the Maghrib at this time was in an advanced stage of social and political disintegration, which precluded any central organized resistance. The challenge was therefore taken up by the sufi orders, which had found a welcome home in the social and political vacuum.

Organized around local zawiyas, the sufi brotherhoods provided social cohesion and spiritual fulfillment at the local level. Led by Shaykh al Jazuli (d. 1465) of the Jazuliya sufi order, resistance to Portuguese raids gathered momentum. Shaykh Al Jazuli occupies a position in Morocco similar to that held by Shaykh Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer in India and Baba Fareed in India and Pakistan.

One of the emirs in southern Morocco, Muhammed al Sa'adi became a follower of the shaykh, organized a resistance to Portuguese encroachments and founded the Sa'adid dynasty. His two sons Ahmed and Muhammed consolidated their holdings in southern Morocco. In 1541, Muhammed al Sa'adi drove the Portuguese from the fort of Santa Cruz, their principal base commanding an entrance to the Atlantic. Within two years (1541-1543), the Sa'adids had recaptured all the fortresses along the Moroccan coast except Tangier and Ceuta. The prestige of the Sa'adids and of the Jazuliya movement rose, while Portuguese trade with the coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean suffered a blow.

It is against this background that the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir must be examined. In 1576, when the ousted Muhammed al Sa'adi sought Portuguese help, King Sebastian saw a golden opportunity to crush the "Moors" and win the Crusades in North Africa once and for all. Extensive preparations were made, and Sebastian landed on the African coast with a seasoned army of more than 20,000. Included in this were the most capable generals, noblemen and men of war that Portugal could muster. The army was well supplied with cannon. The moment for an historic decision on the fate of the Maghrib had arrived.

The gravity of the moment was well understood by the Moroccans and the Crusade was answered by the Jazuliya sufi order. A proclamation of jihad went out. Soldiers gathered from far and wide. Religious fervor rose. Preparations were made and muskets and cannon were acquired from the Turks and the English.

The two armies met just south of the city of Arzila on the plain of al Qasr al Kabir. The Portuguese cannon opened up its salvos. Emir Abdul Malik fell in the first salvo. Immediately, the Jazuliyas appointed his brother Ahmed al Sa'adi as the new emir and charged forth. The burst of Moroccan cannon shook the valley. The fervor of the Jazuliya sufis carried the day. The Portuguese army was crushed. Of the more than 20,000 invaders, only

a few hundred survived to tell the story of this defeat. Sebastian was killed. Ahmed was given the title of al Mansur, the victorious. A large amount of war material and booty was captured. Ahmed al Mansur, always short of money, used the captives to good advantage and ransomed them for gold and silver from Lisbon.

There were three kings involved in this battle—King Sebastian of Portugal, Emir Abdul Malik al Sa'adi and Emir Ahmed al Mansur al Sa'adi. For this reason, the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir is sometimes referred to as the Battle of Three Kings.

The Battle of al Qasr al Kabir was a major event in world history. It marked the end of the western Crusade. Christian ambitions in North Africa were frustrated. The Maghrib remained in the Muslim camp and did not suffer the same fate as Granada. Portugal was crippled and within two years became a vassal of Spain. Taken together with the destruction of the Spanish armada ten years later (1588), the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir marked the end of the Iberian trade monopoly with Asia and America. The Spanish Monarch took over the Portuguese trade monopoly with West Africa and India. Spain tried to guard this monopoly using the resources of the New World. In this effort, she failed because the span of control was too large for the available resources. The navies of Spain and Portugal could not patrol the vast reaches of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Pirates, profiteers and interlopers from France, England and Morocco successfully challenged the monopoly. Although Spain still enjoyed considerable power with its holdings in Mexico, Peru and the Philippines, the Spanish Empire was past its zenith. The wheels of fortune turned, a historic window of opportunity presented itself, and history waited for new players to take the center stage. It was at this juncture that the Protestant nations of northern Europe, the Dutch and the English, entered the world stage with a nascent resilience and made a dash for the trade routes linking Europe, America, Africa and India. The center of gravity of world power was moving towards northern Europe.



## **The Destruction of Timbaktu**

The ransom received by Ahmed al Mansur al Sa'adi from the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578) provided him only temporary financial relief. The traditional sources of income for the emir, namely trade and agriculture, were increasingly out of his reach. In the north, the Mediterranean trade was monopolized by the city-state of Genoa (Italy). A few of the Maghribi merchants worked in partnership with the Genoese and grew rich but the benefits did not accrue to the general population or to the emir. To the west, the Portuguese and the Spanish bypassed the Maghrib and established direct trade with the coast of Guinea. To the south the powerful Songhay Empire had flexed its muscles and had occupied the salt mines of Taodini on the borders of Mauritania. The Maghribi Sultans were cut off from the tax revenues on the salt mines. The Berbers in the Atlas Mountains and the settled farmers in the valleys owed greater allegiance to the local sufi zawiyas than to the emirs who were engaged in constant power struggles. The money that the poor people gave the sufi shaykhs as ziyara was a form of voluntary tax. This was money that was not available to the emirs. The absence of a central authority strong enough to collect taxes and pay a standing army, created a vicious circle. A strong central power was required to collect taxes, which were needed to sustain a strong central power. This vicious circle created a tension between state and society. The armed forces of the emirs became an instrument of coercion to force the rich merchants on the

Mediterranean and the poor farmers in the Atlas Mountains to pay taxes. Coercion destroyed what little legitimacy the emirs enjoyed in the eyes of the population.

This issue, the legitimacy of rule, is a key element in understanding the unfolding historical events in the Maghrib, which influenced the struggle between the powers of the western Atlantic coast and ultimately had an impact on world history. In search of new revenues, Emir Ahmed al Mansur

cast his eyes southwards to the Sudan. Historical Sudan, which was the traditional supplier of gold to the Maghrib, embraces the entire African belt south of the Sahara and should not be confused with the modern state of the Sudan. Since the 8th century, North Africa had carried on a peaceful and thriving trade with the lands south of the Sahara exporting metalware, fine cloth, and horses in return for gold, ivory, cola nuts and Benin (Nigerian) pepper. In the 11th century, tribesmen from the Savannah, the Murabitun had burst forth and captured all of West Africa and Spain, a territory extending from Ghana to the borders of France. The trans-Saharan trade fostered the introduction of Islam and the Africans became a part of the universal community of Muslims. Muslim Sultans who occupied an honored place among the emirs of the world ruled the powerful empires of Mali (14th century) and Songhay (15th century). Askia Muhammed, also known as Askia the Great, during whose reign the Songhay Empire reached its zenith (1493-1528), was a patron of Islamic learning and sought to rule his kingdom in accordance with the Shariah. He performed the Hajj with a large entourage in 1496 and was appointed the spiritual head of the western Sudan by the Sharif of Mecca. Askia Muhammed sought and received the advice of the well-known scholars, among them the celebrated al Maghili (d. 1504) of Algeria. The trading cities of the Niger River, Timbaktu, Gao, Jenne, Kumbi, Tekrur, and Dendi, became centers of learning with extensive libraries. Well known and respected scholars taught at great mosques. Scholarly interactions between Timbaktu, Sijilmasa (Morocco), Cairo (Egypt), and Mecca and Madina were common. The peace of these scholarly interactions was about to be shattered by the cannons of Ahmed al Mansur.

The occupation of the salt mines at Taodini and Taghaza by Songhay was unacceptable to the Sa'adid emir. At first, Ahmed al Mansur sent a scout to reclaim the salt mines (1580). But distances were large and he could not hold the towns against raids from Songhay. The hostilities only served to further disrupt trade between the Sudan and the Maghrib. Trade caravans avoided the westerly route through Morocco and moved eastwards through the central reaches of the Sahara to the Tunisian coast. A desperate al Mansur now decided to invade the Songhay Empire, which he believed would yield him the gold he needed to pay his army. A strong force of more than 4,000 soldiers was assembled consisting of Berbers, Tuaregs, Turks, Arabs and Portuguese prisoners of war. The force was well armed with

muskets and supplied with cannons. The firearms were new weapons not known in the Sudan at that time and played a decisive role in the ensuing encounter.

The planned invasion was opposed by the ulema in Morocco as well as by the merchants. The ulema took a position based on the inadmissibility of a Muslim ruler invading the territories of another Muslim. The merchants were concerned that the invasion would increase social disruptions and further disrupt the trade. But al Mansur was so strapped for cash that he saw no choice but to proceed with this ill-advised adventure.

The Moroccan force crossed the Sahara and appeared on the borders of the Sudan in 1592 under Judar Pasha, a Spanish Christian who had accepted Islam. The Songhay Empire was far from the well-knit power that it once was under Askia Muhammed. Following the death of the great Askia, the empire experienced a long period of instability under a succession of monarchs. Songhay was not a monolithic kingdom inhabited by a single tribe, but a conglomerate of tribes who owed their allegiance to the emperor, some willingly and some by coercion. As instability increased, the Mossi tribes in the southern Sudan and the Hausa tribes to the east rebelled. In spite of these disturbances, the reigning Askia Ishaq II raised a large army and met with the Moroccan force at Tondibi. The Songhay soldiers were well disciplined but the muskets and cannons of the Moroccans carried the day. Facing defeat, Ishaq withdrew eastwards to the Songhay home base of Dendi. From here, the Songhays continued to wage guerilla war. The

Sa'adids took Timbaktu and Gao and fanned out along the Niger River to occupy Jenne. There was a great deal of destruction and mayhem. The great towns along the Niger were looted. Libraries were burned. Scholars perished.

The legacy of this invasion was profound in its impact on Muslim West Africa. Ahmed al Mansur was only partially, and temporarily, successful in solving his revenue problems. The great cities of Timbaktu, Gao and Jenne were so thoroughly destroyed that they never regained their former glory as world-class centers of learning. The trans-Saharan trade along the western routes through Mauritania and southern Morocco was severely disrupted, further impoverishing both the Sudan and the Maghrib. Although Ishaq II continued his rearguard action, the Songhay Empire, which derived much of

its power from the thriving trade centers along the Niger River, never regained its former importance. Agriculture suffered, and social disintegration increased, opening up Songhay territories to invasions by the Mossi from the south and the Tuaregs from the north. Many of the learned men of Timbaktu migrated further east along the Niger River to the prosperous kingdom of Kanem-Bornu providing an impetus to Islamic learning in Katsino and Kano (northern Nigeria).

The Sa'adids could not hold Songhay for long. Although reinforced by additional contingents, they were too few in number to conquer all of Songhay or to police the trade routes leading from the gold mines of Ghana through the Niger valley to North Africa. They soon tired, and by 1618 had given up their efforts to subdue the Sudan. The local Sa'adid governors in Timbaktu, Gao and Jenne were given the grandiose titles of Pasha, and left to their own wits to manage their affairs. These governors intermarried with the local population. The children of these marriages came to be known as Arma. The Arma continued to rule in cooperation with the power brokers of the Sudan until 1700 when they lost their power and were absorbed into the African milieu.

In historical hindsight, the primary beneficiary of the Moroccan invasion was the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The collapse of the Songhay and Mali empires multiplied inter-tribal warfare in West Africa. These wars gained in intensity as the Europeans fueled them with firearms and rum. The soldiers on the losing side in each tribal war were captured as slaves; some were transported to the Sene-Gambia region and sold to the Europeans. Among the slaves were a large number of Muslims.

## The Atlantic Slave Trade

It is ironic that what started as a religious Crusade ended up in the enslavement of a continent. The cruel and inhuman Atlantic slave trade was a culmination of religious, political and social developments in Western Europe and North Africa. The literature on this subject is vast and has been extensively analyzed both from European and African perspectives. Here we look at it through the prism of Muslim history, examining how the slave trade was influenced by events in North Africa and how it influenced Muslim societies in West Africa.

Nothing in human history compares with the Atlantic slave trade (1441-1840) in its magnitude, cruelty or sustained brutality. Slavery was not a new institution invented in the Middle Ages. In ancient times, the losing side in war was enslaved and made to pay for its misfortune with servitude. Slavery was common in the Roman world. In the 10th century, the Vikings captured men and women in their raids in northern Europe and sold them off in the bazaars along the Volga River and the Caspian Sea. The Turks (900-1200) acquired European slaves, trained them in the arts of war and made them a part of the standing Turkish armies. Some of the slaves rose to become kings and ruled as Mamlukes of Egypt and India. Most of the Ottoman Janissaries (1300-1600) were recruited as bonded men from Europe. In the 9th century, a large number of slaves were imported into southern Iraq from Zanzibar and put to work to clear the local swamps. These were called the Zanj. (The word zanjir, meaning an iron shackle or chain, used in Farsi, Urdu and Central Asian languages derives from the word zanj).

In the 15th century, the Crusades were very much alive in the western Mediterranean. The elimination of the Muslim presence in Spain was a prime objective of these Crusades. The Muslims maintained a toehold in Granada, on the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula. Gradually, as political and social disintegration enveloped the Maghrib, the Iberian Christian powers expanded their horizons. In the first stage, important coastal towns in Morocco were occupied and trade was monopolized. In the second stage,

the Maghrib was bypassed along the Atlantic coast, the slave trade began, and direct trade relations were established between Europe and West Africa. In the third stage, Granada was conquered, America was discovered, Africa was circumnavigated and direct European trade was established with India. In the final stage, slavery reached its peak, robbing Africa of millions of men, women and children. In the process, the political landscape of Europe went through successive transformations from feudal to mercantile to an industrial setting, paving the way for the colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is not commonly appreciated that the first target of slavery in West Africa were the Moors (the Portuguese and the Spanish referred to all Muslims regardless of racial differences as Moors). A description of the first raids has come down to us through the writings of the Portuguese writer Azurara. In 1441, a certain young Portuguese captain Golcalves sailed along the coast of southern Morocco and Mauritania gathering ivory, animal hide and sea lion oil for sale in Lisbon. In a chance encounter, he met up with a Muslim couple, wounded the man with a javelin and took them both aboard ship as slaves. At that time the jurisdiction over the Portuguese colony of Tangier was with Prince Henry, an enthusiastic supporter of a naval thrust along the Atlantic seacoast to outflank the Maghrib. The couple was presented to Henry. Sensing an opportunity to capture more slaves, he authorized an ambitious raid the same year under a seasoned and experienced captain Tristao who was familiar with the Atlantic coast of West Africa.

Captains Golcalves and Tristao netted more than a dozen Muslims and enslaved them. Elated, Henry wrote to Pope Eugene IV who gave a decree that capturing the Moors as slaves was a part of the Crusade and whoever sailed south in this pursuit would receive ablution of his sins (1442). This was the origin of the slave trade, which began with Portuguese piracy on the Moroccan coast in 1441. The process was systematized in 1444 when the Portuguese Lagos Company was chartered under the patronage of Prince Henry.

At first, the capture of a few slaves did not cause a stir in Lisbon. There were already many Muslim slaves in Portugal and Spain, just as there were Christian slaves in North Africa, captured in the frequent wars between the Christians and Muslims. The slaves on both sides were kept as domestic servants, subject to the norms of the respective cultures. But as the benefits

of owning slaves became obvious to the richer merchants of Lisbon, and with the trade sanctified by the Pope, investment in slave ventures increased. In 1443, an expedition was financed and organized explicitly to capture more Muslims. The Maghrib was in an advanced state of political disintegration and the presence of these predatory ships was hardly noticed in the palaces of the Emirs, busy plotting against each other. By 1465, Portugal was transporting more than a thousand slaves a year from southern Morocco, Mauritania and Sene-Gambia.

The Portuguese continued their relentless advance along the African coast. In 1456, they were at the mouth of the Gambia River. Here, they exchanged Andalusian silk, crude arms and horses for African gold, ivory and slaves. To protect their shipping, they built strong forts in Sene-Gambia, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Sao Thome, Sao Jorge and Accra, Ghana. These were the first of the Portuguese forts that were to ring the Indian Ocean in the early part of the 16th century, including Goa (India), the Straits of Hormuz (Persia), and Malacca (Malaysia). The delta of the Gambia River was an important outlet for products of the Mali Empire. Many of the inhabitants of the area were Muslim who carried on a thriving trade with North Africa along the trans-Saharan routes. Now, the trade flowed directly to Europe, bypassing the Maghrib and contributing to its decay.

In the Sene-Gambia delta, the Portuguese heard about the rich lands further south. The Ivory Coast lay along the shores of the modern nations of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Further south, along the shores of Ghana, lay the Gold Coast. By 1465, Portuguese ships traversed these shores and appeared at the important trading post of Benin, in modern Nigeria. Benin was a major supply point for black pepper (the Benin pepper) and slaves. Within the next ten years Angola was visited. Slaves were bought in Sene-Gambia, Benin and Angola in return for horses and Andalusian garments.

By 1490, more than 3,000 slaves a year were transported to Portugal from Africa. Most were kept in Lisbon, but some were transported to Spain. Many of these helpless men and women were Muslim. We base this observation on the fact that the entire coast from Mauritania to the delta of Sene-Gambia lay in the Islamic belt. Further south, the predominantly Muslim Fulani and Hausa tribes carried on a brisk trade with Benin at the mouth of the Niger River, and were often caught in the web of the slave

trade. In 1455 the Portuguese could boast that it was possible to buy eighteen Moors in West Africa in exchange for one Andalusian horse!

The news of these Portuguese exploits was heard in neighboring Spain, which felt left out of the spoils. Spain was hampered at this time by internal convulsions. There was friction between Castile and Aragon. The war with Granada was ongoing. So strong was the Portuguese position in relation to Spain that in 1468, King Henry of Portugal laid claim to the throne of Castile. After some skirmishes, open warfare was avoided by the intervention of the Pope. The kingdom of Spain was consolidated with the marriage of Ferdinand of Castile and Isabella of Aragon. In 1492, Ferdinand conquered Granada, and in a voyage financed by Isabella, Columbus discovered America. Spain now felt strong enough to challenge Portugal for the African trade. However, since the Portuguese were the first on the scene, the Papal Bulls solidified their claims to the shores of West Africa. Tensions between Spain and Portugal increased leading again to intervention by the Pope.

The medieval Popes claimed the right to dispose of conquered Muslim territories as well as the lands newly discovered by Europeans. The legal basis was the Donation of Constantine. Under supervision of the Vatican, Spain and Portugal negotiated a treaty dividing up the world into spheres of influence. A Papal Bull sanctified the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). It placed the line of demarcation between Spanish and Portuguese territories 370 leagues (approximately 800 miles) west of the Cape Verde Islands. West Africa, the Indian Ocean and Brazil were allocated to Portugal. Spain received Europe, the Mediterranean, East Asia and the Americas (except Brazil).

In spite of its strong Crusader underpinnings, there was nothing unusual about the African slave trade until 1492. It fit a pattern that had existed for centuries wherein slaves from Europe were sold in Egypt, Central Asia and India, while slaves from sub-Saharan Africa were sold in North Africa, Spain and India. The slave trade declined towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century because the European market was saturated. Lisbon had about ten thousand Muslim and African slaves and could use no more.

The discovery of America changed this picture. It transformed what was up till then a small trade in ivory, gold and slaves into an intricate global web of trade, piracy and politics. The initial objective of Spain in her



American colonies was gold. In their hunt for precious metals, the Spanish obliterated the ancient civilizations of the Aztecs of Mexico, the Mayans of Guatemala and the Incas of Peru. Ninety percent of the men were killed while the women died as a result of slavery and diseases brought in by the Europeans. Within a span of ten years, from 1500 to 1510, the population of Cuba decreased from about one million to twenty thousand. When the Mayan gold was exhausted, the Spanish went after the silver mines of Mexico. The residual indigenous population was enslaved and put to work in the silver mines. Working conditions were so harsh that by 1520, the American colonies were almost drained of their native manpower.

It was about this time that a new crop, unknown in the Americas up until then, was introduced into the New World. The discovery of America had resulted in a vast interchange of agricultural products between the New World and the Old. The potato, tomato and red pepper traveled from the Americas to Europe and Asia, while sugar and cotton went in the other direction.

The introduction of sugar transformed America, Europe and Africa alike. Its impact on history was far greater than that of Mayan gold treasures or the rich silver mines of Mexico. To understand how it happened, it is important to know the process of sugar extraction. The word sugar derives from the Sanskrit word su-ka-ra, meaning a sweet substance. Sugarcane is a tropical crop, which originated in the Indo-Gangetic plains in ancient India. Until the 16th century, it was imported in small quantities into Europe by Muslim merchants and their Venetian partners, and found its way to the dining tables of the rich. When direct European contacts were initiated with India (1496), it became more readily available. Demand multiplied. The islands of the West Indies, and some in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa, were ideally suited to grow sugar cane, a crop that is labor intensive. Native American labor had been exhausted. Moreover, the Native Americans were not suited for the kind of backbreaking work required on the sugar plantations. So, labor had to be imported.

At first, Muslim slaves from Portugal and Spain were imported, but it was soon realized that Europe could not meet the increasing demand for labor. African labor was ideally suited for this task. A two-way exchange of sugar for labor began. As demand for sugar increased, so did the demand for African slave labor. The first shipload of sugar from Cuba arrived in

Spain in 1515. In 1518, the first shipload of slaves arrived in Cuba from West Africa.

Sugar processing yields molasses as a by-product. Fermented molasses yield rum. Molasses were processed into rum in the factories that sprang up in New England, as well as in England, Holland and France. Much of the rum was consumed in Europe. From there, some of it found its way to West Africa. European merchants paid for the slaves with rum, guns, horses, and industrial products from southern Spain, and fine muslin cloth imported from India. Guns were in demand by the African slave agents who used them to hunt for more slaves. Both guns and rum were destabilizing factors in West Africa. It was a recipe for men to get drunk and kill each other. There were enormous profits to be made at each stage of the sugar-molasses-rum-gun-slave transaction. In the process, Europe and America grew rich as Africa bled in agony.

The slave trade was not a business for the common man. Since it required enormous capital, it remained the privilege of emperors, noblemen, interlopers and scoundrels. Portugal wanted to keep a monopoly on this trade and sought justification of its position in its early discoveries as well as in the Papal Bulls. But the lure of profits was too great to keep interlopers out. French and English pirates were active against Portuguese shipping throughout the 16th century. Rich merchants in London, Liverpool, Paris, and Amsterdam financed the expeditions. On occasions, even their monarchs participated.

To simplify the complex interplay between the Muslim Maghrib, Christian Europe and Africa, we have divided the slave trade into seven periods. The first period started with the Portuguese capture of slaves in southern Morocco (1441) and ended with the discovery of America in 1492. The second period lasted until 1541, when Sultan Muhammed al Mahdi of Morocco recaptured the powerful fort of Santa Cruz and drove the Portuguese from the Atlantic coast of his country. This event slowed the growth of Portuguese power but did not eliminate it. The third phase lasted until 1578 when the Moroccans crushed the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr-al Kabir and brought an end to Portuguese ambitions in North Africa. The period 1578 to 1640 was marked by Dutch ascendancy in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. During 1640-1713, there was a bitter struggle between the Dutch, French and the British for control of trade routes; it

ended with the ascendancy of the British. The last period 1713 to 1818 saw the Atlantic slave trade at its height and the systematic transfer of millions of Africans to the Americas.

The coast of Guinea was known as Ghenoa in Arabic and its geography was well documented by Leo Africanus, a North African Muslim who was captured by the Crusaders, brought to Rome, baptized and who rose to become one of the most respected historians of the era. The initial products sought by the Portuguese were fish, palm oil, silver, indigo, cotton, silk, amber, wax and hides. By 1470, the slave trade on the Guinea coast had come alive. In 1486 the coast of Benin opened up for the supply of Benin black pepper and slaves. The Benin black pepper stayed in great demand in Europe until 1506 when the supply of black pepper from India overwhelmed this trade. The Portuguese made few inroads into the interior of Africa, staying close to the coast and establishing strong points on the islands off shore.

The Portuguese claimed a monopoly on trade with the areas they had discovered and Papal Bulls sanctioned this monopoly. Prince Henry, who was the Governor of the Portuguese colony of Tangier, provided the encouragement for the exploration of the African coastline. Henry died in 1460; King Alfonso in Lisbon was less interested in Africa than was the Prince. He gave a contract out to one Fernao Gomes for trading with Guinea with the stipulation that he was to explore at least 300 miles of coastline beyond the coast of Sierra Leone each year. Gomes did a good job and expanded Portuguese explorations all the way to the shores of Angola.

The Portuguese monopoly was challenged by other European powers. In 1474, the Genoese, who were active on the Mediterranean coast of the Maghrib, made it to the coast of Guinea. But the most determined challenge came from Spain. In 1454, Castile laid a rival claim to exclusive trade with Guinea. The rival claims were submitted to the Vatican for arbitration, which went in favor of Portugal. The Spanish claims were revived in 1475 under King Ferdinand of Castile who built a powerful fleet in Seville to wrest control of the Canary Islands. War ensued (1475-1479) and in the outcome Spain obtained rights to the islands while trade with West Africa remained a Portuguese monopoly. The rivalry heated up again after the discovery of America (1492) but was resolved by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) dividing up the world between Spain and Portugal.

The first batch of slaves for transportation to the West Indies was purchased in Lisbon in 1510. The conquest of Granada (1492), and the brutal Inquisition that followed, had generated many slaves and no doubt many of the early slaves exported to America were Spanish Muslims.

In both Portugal and Spain, it was the kings who had titles to the trade monopolies. The Spanish monarch instituted a registration process in 1475 to keep newcomers and interlopers out. In 1481, the King of Spain personally administered the contracts. The slave trade was highly profitable for the monarchs because they derived a duty from every slave ship. It provided more steady income than trade in gold, ivory or Benin pepper.

By 1540, the export of slaves from West Africa reached 10,000 annually. The island of Sao Thome served as a major slave depot until 1578. Some African captives were shipped directly from the Guinea coast to the West Indies and Brazil. Others were brought to Seville and Lisbon and processed for reshipment. In addition, the Portuguese engaged in local slave trade, taking slaves from Benin in Nigeria and selling them further south in Angola, and vice versa, in exchange for rice and other supplies. The forced migration of men, women and children caused enormous human suffering in the coastal regions.

The period 1541-1578 was characterized by increasing armed conflict and social dislocation in West Africa. The Sambas, a warlike tribe, ravaged the land (1540-1570). The resulting social dislocations made it easier for rival chiefs to capture men, women and children, bring them to the coast of Sene-Gambia and sell them to the Portuguese. Further to the interior, the powerful Songhay Empire extended its borders northwards into Mauritania occupying the important salt mines of Tagadhir. This led to skirmishes between the Moroccans and the Songhays, increasing the social dislocations in northwest Africa.

Portuguese power along the Atlantic coast of the Maghrib was arrested by the victory of Sultan Muhammed at the Battle of Santa Cruz (1541). The English, whose interests lay in the reduction of Portuguese influence in West Africa, helped the Sultan in this battle by supplying him with artillery. Following this victory, the Portuguese were expelled from the Moroccan coast except for the port cities of Tangier and Ceuta.

During the same period, the determined resistance of the Ottoman navies contained the growth of Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese did not have the resources to protect their possessions extending over 10,000 miles from Brazil to Indonesia. The English and the French exploited this weakness, each motivated by different social and political impulses. France was allied with the Ottomans against a coalition of the Hapsburgs of Vienna and the Empire of Spain. Interlopers regularly embarked on missions against Portuguese shipping while official France looked the other way. Meanwhile, the

English cities of London and Liverpool, seething with migrant farmers from the interior, became havens for enterprising pirates. The rich merchants and noblemen financed the piracy. London, Liverpool, Antwerp, Amsterdam and Nantes emerged as principal finance centers of Western Europe. The cities of North Africa also participated in this trade, although financiers from Genoa and Venice supplied the capital for North African participation and were its principal beneficiary.

Between 1500 and 1530, hundreds of Portuguese ships were captured and looted. As early as 1530, William Hawkins of England raided the Ivory Coast. The raids were repeated in 1553 under Thomas Wyndham, and in 1554 under John Lock. On occasions, the English and the French cooperated with each other. King John III of Portugal tried both diplomacy and war to stop the piracy. He wrote to Queen Mary of England (1555) and King Francis of France (1559) demanding reparations for the seized ships. When that did not work, he allied himself with Emperor Charles V of Spain, who sent armed convoys to protect the Portuguese merchant fleet. The Pope also applied pressure. None of these approaches worked. In 1565, John Hawkins raided as far south as the coast of Sierra Leone, collected 150 slaves, added 300 more in alliance from a local chieftain and returned to Liverpool.

The English, to further their trade interests, maintained good relations with the Sa'adids of Morocco and helped them in their frequent skirmishes with the Portuguese. Ambassadors were exchanged and trade relations were established between Sultan Muhammed al Sa'adid and Queen Elizabeth I of England. The Moroccans exported salt, sugar, pepper and nuts to England while importing English wool, guns and cannon. When Portugal threatened war, Queen Elizabeth I, who had her hands full with the Scots at that time,

temporarily put a stop to attacks on merchant ships (1568-1571), but the slave trade continued.

The lure of pepper from India, of slaves from the Guinea coast and of silver from the Americas was too great, and the potential for profits too large, for any monopoly to work and to keep the interlopers out. The breakdown of the monopolies accelerated after 1559, a trend accentuated by religious wars in France, Holland and northern Germany between the Catholics and Protestants.

It was at this time that the Dutch entered the competition for slaves. Holland was a part of the checkerboard of dukedoms in northern Germany and was nominally under Hapsburg control. In 1519, the Spanish King Charles V was crowned as the Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope and assumed titular control over Christendom. Taking advantage of internal rivalries between various dukedoms, Spain had acquired Holland as a colony. In 1572, the Dutch threw off the Spanish yoke and became independent. Antwerp was a major trade depot for both Spain and Portugal, and the Dutch inherited the trading legacy as well as ship building technology from the Iberians. When a power vacuum developed in the Mediterranean following the destruction of the Spanish armada by the English (1588), the Dutch were in a position to move in.

Spain tried a blockade of Dutch ships around the coasts of France and Portugal. This only forced the Dutch to extend the reach of their raids. By 1630, the Dutch had destroyed the Portuguese stranglehold on the East Indies trade, and had driven Portugal from strong points in West Africa, North America, Brazil, India, Malaya and Indonesia. Later, in 1640, Portugal gained its independence from Spain, and was able to recapture some of these trading posts as well as its old colonies in Brazil.

By 1600 the Atlantic slave trade had taken on the character of organized international trade. As sugar plantations grew in the Americas, so did the demand for slaves. Indeed, slaves had become a “commodity” wherein profits depended on timeliness and speed of delivery. The European slave traders had their counterparts on the African coast. The coastal chiefs controlled the trade, employing slave catchers who raided several hundred miles into the interior and hauled in the captives. Competition was intense. The demand was met by tribal wars, which generated a steady stream of slave captives. After the disintegration of Songhay (1592), slave raids were

conducted along the Niger River as far inland as Timbaktu and Gao. There were many Muslims among the slaves. An examination of Mexican records shows the names of Mandigoes from Guinea, Yorubas from Nigeria and Bambara from Niger. Thousands were also brought in from East Africa. These included Kaffrarians from Mozambique, Melin from Melindi, as also Muslims from Shofala and Kilwa. Some were captured as far away as Malaya, Sumatra and China. Many were bought and sold several times.

The slave trade was paid for by barter. The Europeans brought in tobacco, rum, firearms, steel bars, beads and re-exported linen from India. The transactions on African soil were peaceful and on equal terms. But once the captives boarded the slave ships, the treatment changed. Ownership was inscribed by red-hot iron on the chests of men or the breasts of women to designate whether they belonged to the British, French or Dutch companies.

Although English pirates raided the West African coast as early as 1434, and harassed Portuguese and Spanish shipping throughout the latter part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until 1640 that England entered the Atlantic slave trade in earnest. Initial raids on Spanish shipping had yielded valuable silver which helped prop up the English currency. Indeed, much of the rivalry between European powers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries can be explained by their desire to protect their currencies. At the time, gold and silver were the international standards of exchange in Europe and Asia. Commodities were exported in return for gold and silver. Exports increased the supply of precious metals, which backed up the currencies. Imports had the opposite effect. Spain had grown rich and powerful on the supply of Mexican silver. England, by comparison, had lost much of its silver to imports from Morocco and Holland. By 1560, when Elizabeth I ascended the throne of England, the pound had lost much of its value. The English pirates temporarily saved the day for England, and the British pound regained its value. A replenished currency made it possible for England to expand its ambitions towards the lucrative Indian Ocean trade.

The same logic and the same forces were operational in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Dutch had displaced the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The English and the French had to buy their pepper from the Dutch. In the process, Holland accumulated more silver while the supply of precious metals in England and France diminished.

Trade with India, West Africa and the Americas required enormous capital. Ships had to be built, soldiers hired, fortifications erected and depots maintained in distant lands. The overhead was high. Initially, only the kings, noblemen or rich merchants could supply this capital. The Dutch were the first Europeans to open up this trade for broader participation.

In 1602 the Dutch East India Company was formed which enabled a broader spectrum of merchants to invest in the profitable Indian Ocean trade. The evolution of this one institution, the trading corporation, was the single most important development in the world in the 17th century. It enabled Western Europe to harness its energies towards the development of trade with Asia, Africa and America, while the rest of the world remained bogged down with disputes about kingship and land turf. Ultimately, it proved to be the means by which Europe conquered and colonized much of the world. By the year 1660, the Dutch had already accumulated the experience of sixty years in the formation and operation of trading companies. The British and the French realized that in order to compete they too must form similar trading companies. The French West India Company was organized in 1664. England organized the Royal African Company in 1672.

The period 1670 to 1713 was marked by intense rivalry between the Dutch on the one hand and the English and the French on the other. The Dutch suffered from the same handicap as had the Portuguese in the previous century, namely, their resources were insufficient to hold a vast world empire. England and France had more manpower and more material resources than the Dutch. Individual merchants as well as pirates found it profitable to beat the Dutch monopoly and transport slaves directly from West Africa to the West Indies.

The English came up with further innovations in the organization of trading corporations. The Dutch trading companies had displaced the monarchs of Spain, but they too tried to maintain a monopoly on this trade. By contrast, the English opened up their trading companies to all merchants. This had the effect of discouraging piracy. Given a stake in the overall profits, British interlopers found it more advantageous to join this new company than to fight it. In 1750, the old Royal African Company was dissolved and replaced by a new corporation called the Company of Merchants Trading in West Africa.



By 1713, the Dutch were exhausted and many of their holdings on the coast of Africa and in the Indian Ocean had fallen to their enemies. England established itself on the southern coast of Guinea in West Africa around the modern nations of Ghana and Nigeria, while the French won the northern coasts around Senegal and Gambia. In 1713, the British and the French won concessions from Spain to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies in America. Between 1713 and 1763, France and England fought for the possession of trading routes and for colonies in America and India. The British, with their superior business acumen, triumphed. In 1757, the Battle of Plassey near Calcutta sealed not only the fate of the French effort in India but of India itself.

As the British gained dominance of the oceans, the Atlantic slave trade gathered momentum. English and French immigration to the American colonies increased, and with it the cultivation of sugarcane and cotton. Demand for slaves outpaced their supply. Whereas the total number of slaves shipped from West Africa to Portugal between 1441 and 1500 was about 30,000, the number between 1700 and 1800 was close to seven million. The total number displaced from all of Africa between 1441 and 1840 exceeded ten million. Untold numbers died at sea. The sick were cast overboard; women abused. In the 19th century, when the British navy imposed a search and impound policy towards slave ships, entire “cargoes” were thrown overboard to prevent the ships from being impounded. Many more millions were killed in the tribal wars that were fought in Africa to capture the slaves. When all these numbers are added up, a conservative figure for the total casualties of the Atlantic slave trade would be fifteen million. (To bring these numbers into perspective, the total population of England around the year 1600 was estimated at six million.)

More than 60 percent of the captives were from West Africa, a region under Islamic influence for centuries. The others came from Angola in West Africa and Mozambique in East Africa, which became the primary sources for slaves sent to Brazil. It may be deduced that up to twenty percent of all slaves transported to the Americas were Muslim. Africa was denied the energy of its young men and its young women. Instead, they became a line item in the enormous capital accumulation taking place in Europe and the Americas.

The capture of slaves was not without resistance. The indomitable human urge for freedom does not give in easily. In 1502, the Africans attacked Fort Sao Jorge. In 1536, there was an African revolt on the island of Sao Thome. In 1570 the Fort of Sao Jorge was again attacked and would have fallen had it not been for the cannon of the Portuguese. There are numerous recorded cases of Muslim slaves organizing resistance to slavery in Brazil, in the West Indies, and in the southern United States.

History itself was a casualty of the Atlantic slave trade. The hapless men, women and children, chained, stuffed like sardines in ships, marked with red hot iron like cattle to be sold in the bazaars of Charleston and New Orleans, changed the self-image of Europe and Africa alike. Conflicts between slave and master were inevitable in this inhuman environment. Attitudes hardened, perceptions were corrupted, and images were distorted. Just as Europeans thought of Africans as cannibals, the Africans thought they were being transported to America to be roasted and eaten. In this crucible was bred the doctrine of racial superiority of Europe.

Oppression cannot be institutionalized without moral justification. A sociology of domination emerged in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and America, condemning the black man to an inherently inferior position and providing a moral justification for his enslavement. The oppressed and the oppressor both suffered. The casualty was the slave, the slave catcher and the slave owner. Christian and Muslim together paid the price.

The slave trade broke down African social structures. Until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, East Africa was a part of the iron culture linking the lands of the Indian Ocean. West Africa was linked to the Mediterranean by trade routes across the Sahara. The slave trade interrupted the natural evolution of African culture. The captured Africans were not the savages and cannibals that they were portrayed to be. They were masons, carpenters, jewelers, and scholars like the people of Asia and Europe. Centralized empires existed in Mali, Songhay, the Congo and Rhodesia. No such centralized authority could emerge after the European intervention.

From a Muslim perspective, the slave trade destroyed the trade of the Maghrib, enslaved many Muslims both in West and East Africa, marginalized West Asia by circumventing its trade routes, and ultimately led to its colonization.

The importance of the Atlantic slave trade decreased as the industrial revolution gathered momentum. Unit labor costs became much lower for machine labor than they were for human labor. The overhead for the transportation of slaves was high and profitability of the trade decreased. The slave trading nations realized that there were more profits to be made by colonization and by peaceful trade than by the slave trade. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a minority opinion in England and in the United States spoke up against this inhuman trade. They were helped in their cause by the Industrial Revolution. The British Parliament abolished the slave trade in England in 1772. Denmark passed similar legislation in 1803. The United States abolished it in 1808, and Holland in 1818.

Even as the curtain fell on the Atlantic slave trade, a scramble ensued for colonies and raw materials required for the industrial infrastructure of Europe. Illegal traffic persisted until 1840. To stop it, Britain entered into mutual search treaties with other maritime nations of the Atlantic to search America-bound ships for human cargo. This effort was only partially successful, so the British navy undertook to patrol, search and confiscate any ship with contraband slave cargo. It was not until 1850 that the Atlantic slave trade finally came to an end. Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in America in 1863. The survival and prosperity of Africans in the New World is a testament to the triumph of human endurance and of the indomitable spirit of humankind.

# COLOSSUS FROM THE WEST

## *Summary*

*Following the defeat of the Portuguese army at the Battle of .L Al Qasr al Kabir (1578), and the destruction of the Spanish armada in the English Channel (1588), the initiative at sea passed from the Mediterranean powers to the nations of northern Europe. Throughout the 17th century, there was a tug-of-war between the Dutch, the British and the French for control of sea routes to America and the Indian Ocean. The Dutch held the initial advantage but the combined resistance of Britain and France soon exhausted the Dutch. The first half of the 18th century saw a struggle between the British and the French. The British had the advantage of superior local leadership and they won. By the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the French abandoned their colonies in India and accepted British supremacy on the Atlantic seaboard. Meanwhile, taking advantage of court intrigues in Bengal, the British won the battle of Plassey (1757). The loot from Bengal fueled the industrial revolution in England and ushered her to the forefront of history.*

*Industrialization transformed England from a mercantile to an industrial economy. Expanding trade, and continuous warfare, required expanded credit. The bankers of Europe emerged as key players at this stage. In return for increasing liquidity through expanded credit, they won important concessions from the sovereigns of Europe for the convertibility of credit instruments as legal tender. By the middle of the 19th century, the bankers were in effective control of the economic sinews of Europe. In the latter part of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire fell into the credit trap. Starting with the Crimean War (1854-1856), the Ottomans borrowed money from the European bankers and lost their initiative in trade and finance. Egypt constructed the Suez Canal on credit and lost its independence in the process. In the twentieth century, the credit system expanded its reach to cover the entire globe and rule the world.*



## **The Rise of England**

If a businessman was searching for one word that would describe the emergence of England from its feudal past, it has to be wool. And if he was searching for a second word to explain the rise of the British Empire, which dominated much of the Islamic world for two hundred years, it has to be trade. Along the road, England was helped by her geography, the cast of history, which seemed to throw the dice in her favor at critical moments, and a steady stream of capable, pragmatic and at times ruthless first-rung leaders.

Notwithstanding the Magna Carta (1215), England was, until the 15 th century, a feudal society. Land was the principal economic resource, and it was divided into large estates, which had been bestowed by the king as a reward to his cohorts for riding with him in battle. Serfs worked each estate, consumed what they needed for their subsistence, and passed on the surplus to the landlord. The process for tax collection was simple but efficient. The Parliament had a say in raising new taxes. In times of peace, the landlords paid a portion of their income to the throne. In times of war, they provided the king with cavalry and foot soldiers. Land was relatively plentiful. The sprawling estates were separated by common land, which was used by the serfs to graze their sheep, generating in the process a little extra income for themselves. Almost everyone was either a landlord or “belonged” to a serfdom. This inefficient but stable social structure served England well for half a millennium, when Europe slept in the stupor of its Dark Ages.

The winds of change blowing in the western Mediterranean in the 15 th century also swept across the English Channel. The first to wake up were the Iberians. Their long and bloody struggle with the Muslims in Spain brought them into contact with the more advanced culture and technology of the Islamic world. As early as 1085, when Toledo fell to the Crusaders, Islamic learning became available to Europe. Schools of translation were set up first in Spain, and later in France, England, Germany and Italy. By the mid-13th century, Christian forces had captured the entire Iberian Peninsula except for Granada, and Islamic learning became diffused into

the citadels of Europe. During the following two centuries (1248-1415), the level of technological know-how was approximately equal in the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco and there was a military equilibrium in the western Mediterranean.

The first break in this equilibrium came with the Portuguese capture of Ceuta in 1415. Taking advantage of internal squabbles among the Moroccan emirs, a small Portuguese force sacked the city, slaughtered its population, and converted its mosque to a cathedral. This was the first European conquest on African soil. The pattern was to be repeated with increasing frequency in later years. The invaders were amazed at the wealth of the city, and the imported articles they found in the houses included porcelain from China, fine muslin from India, ivory and gold from Africa. The capture of Ceuta, and later of Tangier, provided the Portuguese with a springboard for raids along the Atlantic coast of Africa. After 1434 when Cape Bajador was successfully crossed, the Portuguese thrust forward into West Africa in search of ivory, gold, nuts, and slaves. In return, the Europeans paid the Africans with horses, iron bars, cowry shells, Andalusian ware and clothes. When Constantinople (Istanbul) fell to Sultan Mehmet II (1453), Pope Nicholas V declared a Crusade against the Turks. The Portuguese and the Spaniards responded, but instead of proceeding to the eastern Mediterranean where they would face the fierce Turks, they turned their wrath on North Africa. In 1471, the city of Arzila on the west coast of Morocco fell. Five thousand Muslims were enslaved and an immense treasure was captured. The discovery of America (1492), and the Portuguese onslaught in the Indian Ocean (1502-1515) brought Mexican silver and the highly coveted Indian pepper to the European market.

The arrival of products from Africa and India expanded trade throughout the North Atlantic. The Spanish set up a “factory” at Antwerp (Holland), which served as an outlet for their merchandise. The English were latecomers to this commerce, but they entered the fray and they soon became important players in it. England had very little gold or silver to buy the high value Indian pepper or the expensive Senegalese ivory. But there was one English product that was in demand. That was wool. As English participation in the North Atlantic trade grew, so did the demand for English wool. In addition to Antwerp and Lisbon, English traders were active in the

interior of Morocco, trading wool, quicksilver and tin for sugar, gunmetal and gold.

The interests of England and Morocco converged at this time in history, as it was in their mutual interest to contain the Portuguese. This cooperation extended not just to trade, but also covertly to the supply of English cannon to the Moroccans. In 1541, it was English cannon that enabled the Moroccans to reclaim Fort Santa Cruz from the Portuguese.

As demand for wool increased, so did the pressure on grazing land in England. The landlords, sensing the profits that were available from the sale of wool, expanded their holdings into the common grazing grounds that had existed for centuries. The serfs who had depended on this land for their sheep were squeezed out. Surplus labor from the serfdoms poured into London and Liverpool where it was deemed a public nuisance. The earls and the barons could not tolerate the multitude of these untidy peasants. Laws were passed in the Parliament (1535) making it a crime for any unattached serf to loiter in London. The first time a person was caught, he was punished with servitude for two years. The punishment for a second offense was servitude for life. For a while capital punishment was also tried.

The desperation of the London slums gave birth to organized piracy. A return to the land was not possible, so the sea provided an outlet for the vast energies of a seething population. Piracy was not an English phenomenon, nor was it invented in the Atlantic. It was prevalent in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf throughout the Middle Ages. Piracy was made particularly attractive at this time by the mushrooming Atlantic trade. The exploits of the Spanish in America and of the

Portuguese in the Indian Ocean were well known in Europe. Spanish ships loaded with pillaged silver from the Americas, and Portuguese ships carrying Indian pepper were prime targets for pirates.

There was treasure on the high seas. The Spanish and the Portuguese divided up the world into their spheres of influence (1494) and maintained a monopoly on trade. The western Atlantic was polarized between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. The Iberians were the “haves” while the Moroccans, Algerians, English and French were the “have-nots”. These poorer nations became bastions of piracy, which was financed by the rich merchants of Europe and North Africa. On occasion, even the monarchs



invested in these missions. The pirate ships would wait off the Atlantic coast of Africa and ambush vulnerable ships. The payoff was enormous. The silver looted from Spanish ships sustained the English pound during the Elizabethan era (1559-1602). The skills and talents developed in these adventures produced some of the best known sea captains and admirals of the era. Names such as John Hawkins and Drake of England, and Khairuddin and Piri Rais of the Ottoman Empire became legends in history.

The infusion of wealth from this “trade” produced a rich merchant class in each of the participating states. Here we will focus on England. The newly rich merchants and successful pirates became the object of envy of the old feudal landlords. As the merchants made a dash for power, resistance from the feudal establishment was fierce. Until trade in the North Atlantic picked up momentum, political power in England had rested with the monarch, and it was supported by the landed gentry. With the entry of the merchant class into the fray, it became a three-way struggle. The Parliament became an arena for political battles. The forays were fierce but by 1680 the center of gravity of political power shifted decidedly in favor of the merchants. England had finally emerged from its feudal age.

The reign of Elizabeth I served as an historical hinge around which this transformation took place. In 1604, Queen Elizabeth I could look back on her long reign (1559-1603) and take satisfaction in her achievements. Principal among these were the consolidation of the United Kingdom after the defeat of the Scots (1587), the destruction of the

Spanish Armada (1588), and the launching of the joint stock companies (1600). England demonstrated a burst of energy during this period as manifest in the creativity of William Shakespeare (1585-1618), and the voyages of Hawkins (d.1595) and Drake (d. 1596). It is true that most of her subjects lived in poverty in the slums of London and Liverpool, but this destitution served as a catapult to challenge the ocean and ultimately to conquer it. Prior to the year 1600, England was a marginal player in the affairs of the North Atlantic. After 1600, her influence grew steadily and inexorably.

It was the merchants of England who laid the foundation of the British Empire (1650-1799). The passage from a feudal society to an imperial power was not smooth, and we may identify only the major benchmarks in a broad-brush survey as they touch upon Muslim history. The Spanish and

Portuguese monopolies lasted less than a century. Starting with the year 1530, the Ottomans challenged the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The Red Sea was cleared of a Portuguese presence, and the Ottoman hold on Yemen was consolidated. Ottoman navies raided Portuguese strongholds in Hormuz, Oman and Gujrat. By 1540, more Indian pepper flowed to Europe through Alexandria in Egypt than through Lisbon, Portugal. In 1578, Ahmed Al Mansur of Morocco, helped by the religious zeal of the Jazuliya sufis, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir. Sebastian, the young King of Portugal was killed. Two years later, in 1580, Portugal itself became a protectorate of Spain. Meanwhile, English and French corsairs continuously harassed Spanish shipping in the Atlantic. This nuisance, compounded by the Protestant religious views of the English, prompted a Spanish Crusade against England. The Spanish Armada set sail in 1588 with the best ships that Spain could muster, as well as ships commandeered from Portugal. The attempted invasion was a disaster. The English, under command of Charles Howard, destroyed the mighty Armada. Ten years later, in 1598, the Spanish attempted another invasion. This time they were thwarted by nature, and their navy was shipwrecked by a powerful storm in the Atlantic Ocean. Spanish naval power never recovered from these disasters.

These events opened up a window of opportunity in the northern Atlantic. The Dutch gained their independence from Spain in 1572, and became a magnet for enterprising mercenaries from the northern German counties. The Portuguese had long established a trading outpost in Antwerp and the Dutch learned the art of commerce from them. The Spanish had introduced shipbuilding into Holland. As Anglo-Spanish wars took their toll, and the losses were compounded by relentless piracy, a need arose in Spain to build more ships and to do it faster. Spain could maintain the rate of production only at the cost of decreasing quality. On the other hand, the Dutch focused on shipbuilding improvements, increasing the agility and gun carrying capability of their boats. The Dutch had the advantage of access to timber in the Rhine valley while the Spanish forests were becoming denuded by centuries of shipbuilding. As the Dutch ventured into the Atlantic, the Spanish responded by closing all ports on the Atlantic to their shipping. This only forced the Dutch to move out further into the ocean, thereby increasing the range of their shipping. Whenever hostilities took place, the Dutch won because of their more robust ships and the

superiority of their cannon. Gradually, Portuguese and Spanish outposts in West Africa, Brazil and the Indian Ocean fell to the Dutch. By 1640, the Indian Ocean became a Dutch preserve and the lucrative Indian trade flowed through Amsterdam and Antwerp. Cape Town, the hinge around which the Indian and Atlantic waters flow, was established in 1652 and became the nucleus of Dutch settlements in South Africa.

The rise of the Dutch, and later of the British, and their triumph over the Spanish-Portuguese monopolies, was due in no small measure to the development of a new institution. The rise of the joint stock company, as an institution of trade, was the single most important political economic development of the 17th century. What enables common people to achieve uncommon goals is their loyalty to institutions that pool together and channel their energies. The joint stock company proved to be far superior in harnessing the energies of men and material than the monarchical hierarchies of Spain and Portugal, or for that matter the despotic centralism of the Muslim world at that time.

As we shall see, the eclipse of the Muslim world was due in large part to its failure to evolve institutions that could successfully compete with the joint stock company in a world that was increasingly shrinking. Among the most successful of these companies were the English East India Company chartered in 1600, and the Dutch East India Company chartered in 1602. Given a stake in the overall profits, British interlopers found it more advantageous to join the joint stock companies than to fight them.

The mercantile zeal of Western Europe must be looked at in the context of new ideas sweeping the continent. In 1517, the German monk Martin Luther expounded his religious philosophy, which in time came to be known as the Protestant Reformation. Luther placed the center of salvation in faith based on the Bible. He conceived the Church to be a community of believers. These ideas are familiar to Sunni Islam where the Qur'an is the source of Divine Law guarded by the consensus of the community. Indeed, Sultan Sulaiman (1520-1565) gave protection to the Protestants in Hungary against the persecution of the Catholics. The support, while rooted in religious sympathies, was also motivated by a desire to weaken the Catholic powers. Luther's ideas were welcomed by a growing merchant class in northern Europe who found in it an escape from the heavy taxation laid by the Church for performance of obligatory religious rites. The monarchs saw

in it a vehicle for implementing their state and personal agendas. The ideas of Martin Luther in Germany and Calvin (1535) in Switzerland swept across northern Europe where the merchant influence was the strongest. Sweden became Protestant in 1527, Norway and Denmark in 1536, Scotland in 1567, while the counties of northern Germany, Holland and pockets of France and Italy experienced the transformation in the same period. In England, the pace was dictated by the vagaries of King Henry VIII whose obsession for a male heir to the throne of England led him to divorce and marry multiple times, a cardinal sin in the eyes of the Church. When the Church declined to oblige him on his serial marriages and divorces, Henry responded by declaring the Church of England to be independent of Rome and made himself the head of the Church (1534).

The Protestant Reformation freed the mercantile energies of northern Europe. Since the sack of Constantinople by the Latin Crusaders (1204), wealth had displaced faith as the motivation for the Crusades. Nonetheless, rituals and the talisman retained a strong hold on the imagination of northern Europe. The Church, as the sole keeper of the talisman and the dispenser of indulgences, maintained a stranglehold on temporal as well as religious affairs. Merchants begged and monarchs trembled before the heavenly power of the Church. The Reformation changed it all. No longer were the merchants bound by the constraints imposed from Rome. Money could be made—and kept—without buying indulgences from the Church. The Spanish and the Portuguese had sailed on the high seas with a dual burden of conquest and spreading Catholic Christianity. The Dutch and the English had no such pretenses. Their motives were entirely mercantile. If in the process of trading and capital accumulation they amassed world empires, it was a byproduct of their primary focus on money. Their cannons did not roar in the name of God. They bellowed out cannon balls in pursuit of profits.

The resolution of the dialectic between the Protestants and the Catholics was not without a fight. Religious warfare raged in Europe through much of the 16th century. When the dust settled, Norway, Sweden, England, Holland as well as the northern counties of Germany had become Protestant. In England, Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church of England in 1534, and issued an edict that the clergy must submit to the crown. By 1540, most of the relics and shrines in England were destroyed. During the

reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a military alliance was formed between the English and the Dutch (1579) against the Catholic Iberian powers, Spain and Portugal. The alliance survived until 1650 when the British, alarmed at the growing power of the Dutch in the Indian Ocean (Sri Lanka, 1640; Cochin, India, 1641), and their occupation of the American mid-Atlantic coast (New York, 1626), switched sides, and a three-way rivalry between England, France and Holland began for control of trade with India and America.

The British East India Company was by far the most successful of the joint stock companies. Until the discovery of America (1492), the key to the riches of the world lay in the Indian Ocean trade. A look at a map of the world in the year 1500 would show that the Indian Ocean region was by far the most prosperous area of the world. Its combined output of raw materials and manufactured goods was many times that of the Mediterranean region. China, India, Indonesia and Persia were part of its littoral states as were the prosperous ports of East Africa and southern Arabia. Together, this region had a population in excess of three hundred million, while the total population of Europe and North Africa was about a hundred million. Black pepper from Malabar, cinnamon from Sri Lanka, sugar from Surat, ginger from the Malaccas, ivory and iron ore from Mombasa were traded as far away as Alexandria, Egypt, and Venice, Italy. World class manufactured goods included fine muslin from Bengal, cotton goods from Gujrat, silk and porcelain from China, carpets from Persia, perfumes from Arabia, finished steel from Basra and Bijapur.

The great empires of China and India maintained embassies in the littoral states. Freedom of navigation and trade on the high seas was guaranteed by consensus. On occasions, the emperors of the great littoral states, China and India, sent fleets to visit the major ports and promote their manufactured goods. Such was the case with the mighty fleets from China (1402-1415) under the Chinese Muslim Admiral Zheng Yi (also called Admiral Ho), who organized a series of expeditions to Sumatra, Sri Lanka, Calicut, Aden, Mombasa, Shofala and around the tip of South Africa. Sultan Muhammed bin Tughlaq of India made a similar attempt in 1335, but as it often happened with that hapless monarch, the fleet was caught in a storm off the coast of Malabar and perished. During the first half of the 15th century, the Ming dynasty of China maintained a merchant fleet of over 3,000 vessels,

of which 300 were the giant multi-deck, multi-mast ships that dominated the Indian Ocean.

India, in particular, was a pivot to this multi-national trade. Jetting out into the Indian Ocean, its fine harbors at Calicut, Cochin, Surat and Chittagong provided natural anchor points for the east-west trade. Endowed with bountiful natural resources, its harvest of spices was highly sought after. Its manufactured goods included fine cloth, smelted iron, brassware, polished diamonds and carved ivory that were in high demand in the Mediterranean region and East Africa. The annual harvest of spices ensured that the balance of trade was always in favor of the vast subcontinent. Gold and silver accumulated in the treasuries of the Sultans and the maharajas, and these in turn attracted invaders hunting for gold, first from Central Asia and later from Europe.

The monsoons shaped the pattern of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean. The word monsoon derives from the Arabic word “mausam”, meaning climate and weather, and has been incorporated into Farsi, Urdu, Swahili and Malay languages. (Some linguists contend that it derives from the Arabic word “maa-an-Chin”, meaning, water or rain from China). Celebrated in ancient ragas, in ballads of wandering dervishes, in songs of love and longing, as well as modern classics, the monsoons dictate the rhythm of life in South Asia. When the monsoons arrive on time, people rejoice. When they fail, they starve. In late summer, as the relentless sun bakes the dusty Indo-Gangetic plains, cooler air from south of the equator drives in. Moving roughly in the northeasterly direction, it is saturated with the moisture of the Indian Ocean. As it meets up with the majestic Himalayas and the high plateaus of Central Asia, the air rises, cools and parts with its moisture, drenching a parched earth. The floods replenish the soil, sustaining man and beast alike, and bring forth the fauna of the tropics. In January, when the northern hemisphere cools, the process is reversed. Cold air from the landmass of Asia pushes roughly in the southwest direction, bringing rain to the east coast of India. From ancient times, this drama of life and death has been played out, sustaining powerful empires and on occasions, destroying them.

In the year 1500, the Indian Ocean was an Islamic lake. Since the time of Harun al Rashid (786-809), merchants from West Asia and Persia had sailed forth, riding on the monsoons, to India, Africa, Sumatra and China. They

had established themselves all along the rim of the Indian Ocean in an unending chain of trading posts extending from Shofala in Africa to Canton in China. Included among the more important towns were Zanzibar, Dar as Salaam, Malindi, Mombassa, Aden, Oman, Basra, Hormuz, Surat, Calicut, Cochin, Colombo,

Tiruchi, Chittagong, Malacca, Acheh and Canton. By the end of the 15th century, this trade had matured into a stable interchange of men and material.

The Indian Ocean also provided the highway for pilgrimage to Mecca. The Hajj is obligatory on every Muslim, who is physically and financially able. Muslims from Indonesia, Malaya and China could only reach the shores of Arabia by sea. Although many Muslims from the northwestern provinces of India traveled to Mecca by land, many others traveled by sea from the ports of Surat and Cochin. The peace of the Indian Ocean and its open etiquette guaranteed the safety of the pilgrims.

Muslim political influence dominated the Indian Ocean. The islands of Indonesia had accepted Islam. In India, sufi shaykhs had penetrated into the Deccan, while in northern India, the interaction of Islam and Hinduism had produced a rich amalgam. East Africa was dotted with city-states, ruled by African Muslims. So pervasive was the Islamic influence, that Arabic became the language of trade and commerce. Even the Ming emperors of China, in pursuit of their commercial interests, saw it fit to appoint Muslims as sea captains. Admiral Zheng Yi (commonly known as Admiral Ho), who led multiple voyages in the Indian Ocean (1402-1415), was a Chinese Muslim. Freedom of the seas was guaranteed by consensus. Africans, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Sinhalese, Malays and Chinese were all active in this trade. Even though Muslim influence was dominant, Hindu merchants from Malabar or Buddhist priests from Canton traveled in peace and competed for trade and influence on equal terms. Thriving commerce produced a rich culture, giving birth to new languages such as Swahili in East Africa and transforming old ones such as Malay.

The peace of this commerce was shattered by the European invasions. What had been an ocean of trade and commerce for a thousand years became an ocean of piracy and destruction. Vasco de Gama sailed to the coast of Malabar (1496) guided by an Indian mariner, Ahmed Ibn Majid, whom he had met in Mombasa. In the 15th century, the Muslims knew far

more about the Indian Ocean than did the Europeans. As early as the year 1000, the Afghan historian Al Bairuni knew the shape of the tip of Africa. By contrast, European knowledge of the Indian Ocean was poor. They imagined that India extended all the way east of the Nile River to the Malaccas (Malaysia). They used the term “Greater India” to denote the Deccan. Northern India was called “Lesser India”. The territories in East Africa were called “Middle India”. Somewhere in Middle India, they imagined, there was a Christian King by the name of Prester John who was waiting for the Europeans to join hands with them in a holy war against the Muslims. The Portuguese and Spanish were not just out to find a new trade route to the Indian Ocean. Their aim, as explicitly stated in a letter from the Portuguese King Manuel to Sultan Qansuh al Ghouri of Egypt in 1507, was to invade Arabia from the territories of Prester John and destroy Mecca.

The Portuguese devastated the principal ports of the Indian Ocean (1504-1520). They succeeded in destroying the peaceful trade there, changing a life style that had existed for centuries. For twenty-five years, there was no answer to the Portuguese atrocities. Only after the Ottomans organized a credible naval defense did the Portuguese meet their match. In 1517, the Ottomans captured Egypt, moved the Caliphate to Istanbul and took on the burden of defending Muslim interests worldwide. Starting with the year 1530, the Ottoman navy challenged the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. One by one, the important trading centers of East Africa were won back. By the year 1540, Indian pepper flowed both on Muslim and Portuguese ships. Towards the end of the century, events in North Africa and Western Europe had a direct impact on the power balance in the Indian Ocean. After the Portuguese defeat at al Qasr al Kabir (1578), and the destruction of the Spanish Armada by the English (1588), Spanish and Portuguese power waned, while the English and the Dutch entered the fray.

Armed with superior guns mounted on larger and more efficient ships, the Dutch quickly overran Portuguese outposts in the Indian Ocean. In 1616, the Dutch East India Company obtained trading rights in Japan. In 1619, it founded a colony near Jakarta (Indonesia). In 1615, the Dutch wrested the Straits of Malacca from the Portuguese. The island of Mauritius was reinforced and a settlement was established at the southern tip of Africa (1640). Trading colonies were established at Isfahan (Persia), Surinam (South America) and New Amsterdam (later renamed New York, North



America). They drove the Portuguese from Brazil and cornered its slave trade, but the Portuguese recaptured the colony after they won their independence from Spain (1648). The Dutch were almost as ruthless as the Portuguese, especially in their dealings with the Indonesians and the Malays, but their focus was primarily trade. As long as they obtained their spices, they did not force their Christian views on the local, predominantly Muslim populations.

A Dutch monopoly of the Indian Ocean trade was no more acceptable to England and France than was a Spanish-Portuguese monopoly. Judging correctly that India held the key to trade in the Indian Ocean, King James I of England sent an ambassador, Thomas Roe, to the imperial court of Jehangir. This was in keeping with the English desire to establish trade relations with the principal seats of power in Asia. For instance, in 1581, Queen Elizabeth I had sent Harborne as her ambassador to the Ottoman court of Murad III who conferred trade privileges on the English because the Ottomans needed English tin for their bronze cannons. Roe arrived in Surat in 1615 and proceeded to Agra to present his credentials to the Great Moghul. Each applicant to the imperial court was required to present gifts befitting his rank. According to his own admission, Roe's gifts were meager and consisted of frayed mirrors, moldy leather cases and faded velvet, some paintings and an old English coach. The Emperor politely accepted the gifts, showing a good deal of interest in the paintings, a field in which the Great Moghul was a connoisseur. As for the coach, the Great Moghul had it immediately repaired and reupholstered with gold brocade. There is no evidence to support the position taken by some English writers that Roe befriended Jehangir and the two together indulged in bouts of drunkenness and opium consumption. The Emperor considered "the Franks" hardly worth mentioning in his great memoirs. (The word *Firangi* in Hindustani derives from the word Frank, and was used derogatively to refer to Europeans during the colonial era). The closest the English Ambassador got to the Emperor was at one of the royal send off ceremonies for a military campaign, and even that was at several arms length. Emperor Shah Jehan was more explicit in his derision of the Ferangis: "The Franks would be a great people were it not for three things. First, they are heathens. Second, they eat pigs. Third, they do not wash after they use the bathroom". Such smugness was characteristic of Asian rulers in the 17th and 18th centuries, and it prevented them from accurately assessing the capabilities of these

“Firangis” from across the world. In the long run, it proved to be their undoing.

The goods that the English brought to Surat—wool, mercury, red lead, vermillion, and drinking glasses—hardly caused a stir in the merchant community of Surat which was accustomed to getting paid in gold and silver. Nonetheless, Roe’s observations are among the first by a European about life at the court of the Great Moghul. Roe records how Jehangir was weighed in gold and diamonds at one of his birthdays, and the gold was distributed to the poor. He notes that the royal military camp embraced a circumference of more than thirty miles, and was larger than any European city at that time. Roe stayed in India until 1619 and obtained from the Emperor a royal Farman (decree), giving the English trading privileges at Surat. The Farman of Jehangir was a turning point in history. It was the first instance of an Indian Emperor formally granting trading rights to a European company. It opened India to European influence.

A three-way rivalry between the French, English and the Dutch ensued. It was like the front-runner in a marathon race who is continuously challenged by two very versatile and agile competitors. The combined resources of England and France were far greater than those of Holland, even when the energies of the northern German counties are included in the Dutch effort. Moreover, the Great Moghuls preferred the English because they refrained from stepping on the religious sensibilities of the Indians. The Portuguese had instituted inquisitions in Goa, torturing Muslims and Hindus alike, and had captured many Bengalis to be sold as slaves in far-away Brazil. In 1635, Emperor Shah Jehan ordered the Governor of Bengal, Qasim Khan, to give the Portuguese a taste of their own medicine. Qasim Khan destroyed the Portuguese fortifications on the River Hooghly, captured several hundred of them and sent them to Agra, where they recanted, asked for mercy, and were pardoned by the Emperor.

The English demonstrated their sea prowess soon after they ventured into the Indian Ocean. In 1615, one year before Roe landed in Surat, an English fleet defeated the Portuguese off the coast of Bombay, and Roe could boast to Jehangir that the king of England would soon control the mighty Indian Ocean. Having surrendered mastery of the ocean to the Europeans, the land powers of the Indian Ocean had to depend on the European powers to ensure safe passage for pilgrims to Mecca. Until 1615, Indian pilgrims had

to obtain a “passport” from the hated Portuguese, pay them a fee, and have their papers stamped with a presumed likeness of Jesus and Mary, for safe conduct through the Indian Ocean. Muslims honor Jesus as a great Prophet, and Mary as the mother of Jesus, and drawing their pictures is considered sacrilegious just as much as drawing a picture of Prophet Muhammed or Prophet Moses. Ships that did not have a Portuguese passport were liable to be sunk. It was in part to offset the influence of the Portuguese that Jehangir had given the English trading rights in Surat.

Yet another opportunity presented itself to the English in 1622. Shah Abbas of Persia, fresh from his victories over the Ottomans in the silk producing district of Tabriz and his capture of the trading post of Qandahar (Afghanistan) from Emperor Shah Jehan of India, desired to get rid of the Portuguese who had remained in their fortress at Hormuz since 1515. They had bottled up trade in the Persian Gulf, harassed merchant shipping and tortured pilgrims to Mecca. The Portuguese Fort at Hormuz was impregnable from land, and the Shah did not have sufficient naval power to challenge the Europeans at sea. A deal was struck with the English East India Company. In 1622, Persian cavalry attacked from land, as the English bottled up the Portuguese from the sea. Hormuz was recaptured, and Portuguese power in the Persian Gulf came to an end. In appreciation of their service, Shah Abbas granted the Company preferred trading rights throughout the Safavid Empire. As the Company had already acquired trading rights in Surat, the events at Hormuz consolidated the Company position throughout the Arabian Sea.

Sri Lanka was the next major theater of operations. The Portuguese had ruined the economy of the island during their years of occupation. Its agriculture was stagnant, dams broken, plantations in disarray. Some of the Sinhalese had been captured and forced to serve as mercenaries in the Portuguese wars off East Africa. Raja Sinha of Colombo ardently desired to get rid of these unruly foreigners. Meanwhile, the Dutch had arrived on the scene and they saw in the island an ideal place to establish a colony. Raja Sinha, unaware of Dutch ambitions, appealed to them for help. In 1640, a Dutch expeditionary force defeated the Portuguese off Colombo and that city became a Dutch colony. The Dutch were as ruthless as the Portuguese in pursuing their commercial interests, which lay primarily in increasing the production of cinnamon and other spices. But they refrained from forcing

the Sinhalese to convert. It was in Sri Lanka that the doctrine of apartheid (a Dutch word, meaning separation of races) was first practiced extensively. Colombo served as a transit point for ships of the Dutch India Company on their way to Indonesia and Japan. Dutch women were few, so some of the Dutch men took Sinhalese women as wives. However, any Dutch woman caught with a Sinhalese man was flogged, put in jail for life, and her children enslaved. The Dutch followed up their victory in Sri Lanka by establishing a presence at Cochin on the Malabar Coast (1641) and Masulipatam on the east India coast (1642). The Dutch held Colombo until 1795 with the help of German mercenaries. During the Napoleonic wars (1795-1812), the English bribed the German mercenaries and their commander Pierre de Meuron to switch their loyalties, and Colombo surrendered to the English commanders sent from Madras (1798) without a fight. The fall of Colombo also tightened the isolation of the Kingdom of Mysore under Tippu Sultan, which fell a year later (1799).

The English position improved both in America and India as the 17th century rolled on. In 1620, the Pilgrims, Puritan refugees from a doctrinaire England, landed at New Plymouth, Massachusetts, after spending more than ten years in the tolerant social climate of Holland.

In 1629, the Colony of Massachusetts was established. In 1639, the East India Company obtained the permission of the Nawab of Arcot to establish a factory at Madras. The following year, with the permission of Emperor Shah Jehan, they established Fort George near Calcutta. In 1651, the English felt strong enough to declare a monopoly on the lucrative slave trade with West Africa. Soon thereafter, they overran the Dutch colonies in America, seized New Amsterdam and renamed it New York (1664). In 1668, Charles II who had received the island of Bombay as a dowry when he married Princess Catherine of Portugal sold it to the East India Company for ten British pounds. By the year 1700, with Portugal defeated at sea, and the Dutch tiring, England was well positioned to dominate the Indian Ocean. The only rival left was France. While the Europeans fought for domination of the seas, and of world trade, the great dynasties of the Moghuls and the Safavids were exhausting themselves while expanding their land empires, and paid scant attention to building credible sea forces. Even the mighty Emperor Aurangzeb, in his advance towards Bijapur,

Golkunda, Poona, Mysore and Arcot (1675-1707), bypassed the Portuguese stronghold of Goa.

An event of historical consequence occurred towards the end of the 17th century (1696). With the help of soldiers from Baluchistan and Punjab (modern Pakistan), the Sultan of Oman laid siege to the strategic Portuguese Fort Jesus of Mombassa (Kenya). The siege started in 1694. Resistance was desperate. So was the determination of the Baluchis to expel the hated Portuguese who had terrorized East Africa for over a hundred years. Reinforcements arrived for the attackers from Oman and Baluchistan and for the defenders from Goa. The Sultan of Oman was determined to re-establish his sway over trade in East Africa. After a series of determined assaults, the Omani, Baluchi and Punjabi troops triumphed. Since the troops came from the territories of India, it may be inferred that the Emperor Aurangzeb knew of the attack and condoned it. Following this victory, Omani control over the East African coast was consolidated and it remained so until displaced by the British in 1850. The Sultanate of Oman played a key role in the decisive confrontation between the English and Tippu Sultan of

Mysore (d. 1799). The fall of Fort Jesus signaled the end of the Portuguese Empire in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese hung on to Goa, as an appendage of the British Empire, until the Indian Army evicted them in 1962.

By 1713, the Dutch were exhausted, and competition between the English and the French sharpened. The rivalry was bitter both in India and in America. At stake was the wealth of Asia and America, perhaps the mastery of the world. The French and the British East India Companies both intervened in the wars of succession that raged in India after the death of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb (1707) in which the Moghuls, Afghans, Rajputs, Marathas, Sikhs and Indian Muslims were all involved. In anticipation of the spoils, the British and the French fought each other on and off throughout the first half of the 18th century. The battles raged at sea and on two continents, in America and in India. Initially, the French held the advantage. With capable generals like Dupleix (1742-1754) in Pondicherry (India), they appeared to be winning the contest. But the British proved more resourceful, and generals such as Robert Clive proved to be more than a match for the French officers. The six year war of 1756-

1763 was a disaster for the French. By the terms of the treaty that ended the hostilities, France ceded to England almost all of its holdings in India and most of its privileges in America.

The English triumph over their adversaries was due to several interrelated causes. In the ruthless competition for trade and slaves, the Joint Stock Company provided a far more efficient structure than the hierarchical structure under which the Portuguese and Spanish operated. The Portuguese governors had to refer every major decision to Lisbon. Sometimes, it took more than a year for a decision to arrive. By then, circumstances would have changed. By contrast, the governors of the East India Company enjoyed enormous leverage for local initiative, as evidenced by the activities of Robert Clive in India. Secondly, the Portuguese and the Spaniards were saddled with a religious burden, which worked to their disadvantage. Wherever they went, they brought with them their Inquisition, and their intense hatred of Muslims. In their dealings with the Sinhalese, Indians, Malays, and

Africans, they were ruthless, cruel and merciless. They obliterated the civilizations of America, and would have done the same to the civilizations of Asia, were it not for the powerful dynasties of the Great Moghuls, the Safavids and the Ottoman Turks.

The English and the Dutch had no religious hang-ups. They were in the Indian Ocean strictly for profit. As long as their companies made money, they left the local populations alone. Exceptions were West Africa and Mozambique, which served as conduits for slaves. The English had the advantages of greater manpower and material resources over the Dutch. The population of England in 1600 was approximately five million while that of Holland was less than one million. The Dutch had to hire German mercenaries who could be bribed to shift allegiances, as happened during the British conquest of Colombo. The English demonstrated greater cohesiveness, resourcefulness, administrative and military acumen over the French. And lastly, history itself seemed to cast its vote for the English, as it did when the Spanish Armada was twice destroyed (1588 and 1598) and Robert Clive won over Siraj ud Dawla (1757) in Bengal against heavy odds.

The acquisition of Bengal turned the wheels of fortune in favor of England. Until 1757, the balance of trade was invariably in favor of Asia. The gold and silver captured from the Incas and the Aztecs flowed to

Europe through the slave trade, and from there it found its way to Asia in return for spices and manufactured goods. Bengal opened for Europe the gates to the wealth of Asia. An immense booty was transported from Calcutta to London between the years 1757 and 1765. In addition, the East India Company imposed a heavy tariff of seventy percent on all cloth produced in Bengal, while flooding the Indian market with cheaper goods made in Manchester and Liverpool. Within eight years, what had been one of the most prosperous regions of Asia fell into depression, and famine set in 1765. The enormous capital acquired from Bengal triggered the Industrial Revolution, commonly dated with the first invention, the steam engine, in 1758.

The British position in India was not consolidated until the fall of Mysore (1799) and the end of the Napoleonic wars (1798-1812). But with the resources of America and the wealth of India at their command, the odds were increasingly in favor of the British. The loss of the American colonies (1776) allowed the British to focus on India. Within two years after Tippu Sultan of Mysore died fighting in battle (1799), and Napoleon was forced to withdraw from Egypt (1799), the British had defeated the Marathas (1802) and advanced towards Delhi.

## **The Battle of Plassey**

“It is not too much to say that the destiny of Europe hinged X upon the conquest of Bengal”, wrote the historian Brook Adams in 1896. People who look at today’s impoverished Bangladesh cannot imagine that in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, it was the hub of the most prosperous region in Asia. The Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud Dawlah, ruled a territory extending from Dacca (Bangladesh) to Benares (northern India). The province had a population of 25 million; about four times the population of England at that time. The Ganges delta provided abundant rice, fish and jute. The province was bustling with manufacturing activity. The fine muslin cloth of Murshidabad was sought after the world over. Bengal also produced the finest steel, using iron ores imported from Tanzania in Africa.

Within a span of ten years after its capture by the British, Bengal, once the richest province in Asia, became destitute. To understand how it happened, one must examine the broader political developments in South Asia in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The death of Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb (1707) let loose the centrifugal forces that were kept in check by the indefatigable energy of the aging Emperor. Prince Muazzam, who was already in his sixties, was hastily called back from Kabul to Delhi, and ascended the throne in the Red Fort under the title of Bahadur Shah. By this time, the empire was in turmoil. The Maratha advance in the Deccan was in full swing. A truce between the Moghuls and the Sikhs broke down after the assassination of Guru Govind Singh (1708) and a full-scale uprising erupted in the Punjab under Banda Singh. Bahadur Shah spent a greater portion of his tenure in office containing the Sikh revolt. Although the Moghul armies recaptured the principal cities, the Sikhs continued their guerilla war from the hills in northern Punjab. Bahadur Shah, tired of these campaigns, died in 1712.

Court intrigue took over the Moghul court. Azim us Shan the heir apparent, and two of his brothers, were murdered at the instigation of Zulfiqar Khan, a general in the army. In his place, Jahandar Shah, a debaucher who spent all his time with his concubine Lal Kunwar, was



hoisted as the new king. Enraged at the murder of his father, Farrukhsiyar (1713-1719), the eldest son of Azim us Shan, raised an army in Bengal, and marched on Delhi with the help of two Sayyid brothers, Hassan Ali and Hussain Ali. Jahandar and Zulfiqar were both killed. The two Ali brothers gained enormous power in the court. Hussain Ali obtained the regency of the Deccan as payment for his services. But a rift developed between Hassan Ali and the Emperor; the Ali brothers blinded Farrukhsiyar and imprisoned him until death. Raushan Akhtar, a grandson of Muhammed Shah, was made the king. Raushan broke the stranglehold of the Ali brothers by forging an alliance with Afghan and Irani nobles.

One of the Afghan nobles, Chin Qilich Khan, was given the title of Nizam ul Mulk and was made the divan. He tried to arrest the decay in the empire, but the rot was too far-gone. Disgusted, he left for the Deccan in 1723, where he founded the state of Hyderabad, which lasted until 1948. Similarly, Bengal and Oudh broke away in 1722. These provinces accounted for the bulk of Moghul revenues. Although the local rulers continued to acknowledge Moghul overlordship, they were all but independent. Meanwhile, the Marathas consolidated their hold on central India. In 1732, they occupied the province of Gujrat, cutting off the important trading center of Surat from Delhi. Under the leadership of Baji Rao, they moved north and reached the suburbs of Delhi in 1737. Alarmed at the Maratha advance, the Emperor recalled the Nizam from Hyderabad. But international events overtook the turmoil in India at this juncture.

The disintegration of the Safavid Empire and the occupation of its capital by the Afghans in 1722 invited intervention from the Russians and Ottomans. The Persians rallied under Nadir Quli, a general in the

Safavid army, drove the Russians out, and won their territories back from the Ottomans. Nadir tried to interest the Safavid Shah Tahmasp II in the affairs of state, but finding him incompetent, dethroned him, and declared himself Nadir Shah of Persia (1736).

Once the Russian menace had been contained, Nadir turned his attention to the east towards Qandahar from where the Afghans had launched an invasion of Persia. Nadir Shah appealed to the Moghul Emperor Muhammed Shah for his help in preventing the Afghan rebels from escaping to Kabul. In the bureaucratic machinery of the Moghul court, it is not even certain that the Emperor was briefed on the full import of events in

Persia and Afghanistan. The reply from Delhi was ambiguous. The irate Nadir Shah captured Qandahar in 1737, and in hot pursuit of the rebels, moved to Kabul in 1738. He would not overlook the indifference of the Delhi court to his appeal. He crossed the Khaiber Pass in the winter of 1738, and took Peshawar. Moving forward, in 1739, he occupied Lahore and sent word to Delhi that he “had arrived in India to punish the courtiers who had shown him disrespect”.

The gauntlet was thrown. The Moghul armies moved towards Karnal in Punjab to meet Nadir Shah. The Persians avoided the main Indian force. Instead, they raided auxiliary troops, which were being brought in by the Moghul generals, cutting down the Indian forces one by one. Camels loaded with gunpowder were let loose on the Indian formations, causing havoc on the infantry and elephant corps alike. In one of the skirmishes, the commander-in-chief of the Indian army, Khan e Dauran, was killed, and Burhan ul Mulk, governor of Oudh was captured. With the Moghul armies in disarray, the Moghul emperor sued for peace.

Once he was in captivity, the treacherous Burhan ul Mulk turned against his own Emperor, and advised the Persian monarch to demand an indemnity of twenty million rupees from the Moghul. He also demanded the position of commander-in-chief of the disarrayed Moghul armies. Muhammed Shah gave the job instead to Nizam ul Mulk. The irate Burhan ul Mulk advised the Persian invader to up the ante and move on Delhi. A face saving formula was arranged, and the humbled

Moghul Emperor led the victorious Nadir Shah into the capital, presumably as his “guest”. While negotiations were going on about the indemnity, a rumor spread that Nadir had been killed. The ill-advised citizens of Delhi went on a rampage and killed several hundred Persian soldiers. Enraged, Nadir Shah gave orders for a general slaughter. Not since the invasion of Timur had Delhi seen such destruction. Over a hundred thousand citizens were butchered. Peace was restored after Muhammed Shah offered one of his grand daughters in marriage to the son of Nadir Shah. The peacock throne of Shah Jehan, together with the entire collection of gold, diamonds and rubies in the Moghul treasury was given away as “dowry”. In addition, Nadir’s soldiers tortured the nobles into giving up vast amounts of hoarded wealth. It is said that Nadir required 70 camels to load up the gold and the precious stones. So large was the amount of loot

that upon returning to Persia, Nadir Shah forgave the collection of taxes in his vast empire for three years. He also annexed all the territories to the west of the Indus River, comprising most of what is today Pakistan.

Nadir Shah's invasion destroyed whatever remained of the prestige of the Moghul emperor. The Marathas moved to fill the political military vacuum, advancing from central India towards Delhi. The Sikhs regrouped and rejoined their armed struggle in the Punjab. Bengal, Oudh, and Hyderabad practically became independent. Without the revenues of these vast provinces, the Moghul Empire became but a shadow of its old self. Its hold now diminished to a few square miles around Delhi.

With the Moghul Empire in ruins, the focus shifted to its successor states in the provinces. The Moghul Emperors had appointed nawabs (governors) to run each of the major provinces. With the empire in disarray, these nawabs became independent. The capable administrators Nawab Murshad Quli Khan and Nawab Aliwardi Khan governed the large province of Bengal (1722-1756). When Aliwardi died in 1756, his grandson Siraj ad Daula became the Nawab. This upset Mir Ja'afar, a brother-in-law of Siraj, who had hoped to be the next Nawab. The Bengali court in Murshidabad became a cobweb of plots and counter plots. These court intrigues provided an opening for the British who were not content with commercial expansion in Bengal, but wanted political control as well. When the East India Company reinforced Fort William in Calcutta against his expressed wishes, Siraj ad Dawla was furious. At his orders, 155 Englishmen were locked up in a small chamber barely large enough to accommodate half as many. Most of the hapless prisoners did not survive the summer heat of Bengal, and the British dubbed the death chamber the "Black Hole of Calcutta".

The battle lines were now drawn. By 1757, Britain was by far the paramount sea power in the world. It had displaced the Dutch, outmaneuvered the French, and established itself in America and Asia alike. Its holdings included colonies in America, Canada, West Africa, India and Australia. The slave trade had made England rich and its horizons now reached out to the control of the great landmass of Asia and Africa. On the Indian subcontinent the British East India Company held the strategic ports of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Robert Clive, a shrewd and capable administrator who had outfoxed the French in southern India, led the Company affairs. Clive knew through his agents the intrigues in

Murshidabad, and made a deal with Mir Ja'afar. In return for the latter's support against Siraj ad Dawlah, Clive promised him the Nawabship of Bengal. The zamindars and bankers of Bengal also joined Clive's camp.

On June 28, 1757, at the Battle of Plassey, a day marked with infamy in the history of India, the Bengal forces met the British. The Bengal army had 50,000 troops commanded by Mir Ja'afar. The British contingent was barely 3,000 strong. As soon as the battle began, Mir Ja'afar betrayed Siraj ad Dawla, and went over to the British with the bulk of his army. Siraj ad Dawla was killed in the first hour of combat. With Bengal at his feet, Clive made Mir Ja'afar the nawab. In return, Mir Ja'afar showered the British with untold riches. Clive himself received a million pounds in gold and precious stones. Taxes for the East India Company were forgiven. But when the wily Mir Ja'afar showed his reluctance to part with additional wealth, Clive replaced him with another satrap, Mir Qasim. The East India Company had by now a taste of the wealth of Bengal, accumulated over centuries of opulent Moghul rule. Unable to satiate the unquenchable greed of the



Company, Mir Qasim traveled westward to ask for help from the Nawab of Oudh in expelling the British. Oudh, in turn, requested assistance from

the Moghul court in Delhi. Without financial resources, the Moghuls could not sustain an army. Only eighteen years separated the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah (1739) from the Battle of Plassey (1757). The Moghul armies were a shadow of their former self. Nonetheless the Emperor sent a contingent to help the Nawab of Oudh. The Indian armies met the British at the Battle of Buxor (1764). By now, the British could field more than 10,000 troops plus an equal number of Indian Sepoys. The armies were well supplied with cannon and rifles. The Indians suffered a disastrous defeat. Under the terms of capitulation, the Moghul Emperor surrendered to the British the revenues from Bengal, Bihar and most of the United Provinces. The document signed at the termination of the Battle of Buxor became the legal basis for the British Raj (British rule).

What Robert Clive started, his successor, Warren Hastings completed. With the instincts of a cold, ruthless extortionist, Hastings used every administrative trick in his bag to extract the last ounce of gold from Hindus and Muslims alike. He imposed hefty taxes on Indian manufactures while flooding the Indian market with cheap cotton goods manufactured in Lancashire. He waged war on the Afghans of Rohilkhand, pillaging the northern territories as he went. He starved the Begums (princesses) of Oudh and tortured their servants using another traitor Asif ud Dawlah as his tool, until the Begums surrendered more than a million pounds in state jewels. Within a span of ten years, Bengal was on its knees. What was once the richest province of Asia was now broke. Famine set in in 1765 and the streets of Calcutta were littered with corpses.

The transfer of this immense treasure from Bengal made possible the Industrial Revolution in Europe. It is significant that historians date the Industrial Revolution from 1758, one year after the Battle of Plassey. Capital is the energy that gives momentum to invention. Without capital, inventions have as much power as dead rocks. The infusion of capital into England accelerated innovation. Inventions appeared in rapid succession. The flying shuttle was invented in 1760, the spinning jenny in 1764, the steam engine in 1768 and the "mule" in 1779. Before the Battle of Plassey, the iron and steel industry in England was no more advanced than that in Bengal. Within a generation after Plassey, Europe had far outstripped Asia in technology.

Some scholars have dated the turning point in relations between the Islamic world and Europe from 1799, the year Napoleon landed in Egypt. This date misses the mark by more than forty years. By the time Napoleon invaded Egypt, the wheels of fortune had turned, and it was too late for the Islamic world. The Industrial Revolution had been in full swing for more than a generation. Napoleon's triumph over the Turks in Egypt was only a symptom of the technological superiority achieved by Europe over Asia. The real historic hinge was the Battle of Plassey, fought on the sweaty swamps of Bengal in 1757.

The loot from Bengal heralded the onset of the capitalist society. Industrialization further consolidated the accumulation of capital. With the wealth of Bengal at their command, the British successfully fought off Tippu Sultan of Mysore (1770-1799) and subdued India. With the resources of the great subcontinent of India at its command, European colonization of Asia and Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was only a footnote.

## **Emergence of a Global Credit Economy**

Civilization moves in epochs. In each epoch, the rules of competition are different. What drives the global civilization today is economic centralization, and the aristocrats of this drive are the bankers. The merchant, the industrialist, the soldier, the teacher and the mullah are all beholden to the banker, and more specifically, to the global credit system.

There is a great deal written about interest and usury by Muslim scholars. It is a complex issue and continues to be the subject of much controversy. There is always the risk of oversimplification because modern banks discharge a variety of services and cannot be lumped into one category. Nonetheless, in the caldron of global ideas, the Muslim point of view about usury must be put forth as clearly as possible so that one may evaluate it on its merits. Islam maintains that usury is debilitating to civilization. It saps the strength of individuals and nations, encourages greed, and discourages trade. It works in the direction of economic centralization, makes the rich richer and the poor poorer, creates instability in the society and ultimately destroys it. ("Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands one whom Satan by his touch has driven to madness", Qur'an, 2:275-276). Another way to state the Islamic position is that zero interest is the best guarantor of sustained economic growth. Islam is not the only religion that looks askance at usury. The Christian church also frowned upon usury in medieval times.

Interest and usury are not new to the modern age. They have been practiced in practically every civilization from times immemorial. In India, the village moneylender has been known for ages. The function of these intermediaries in the cycle of trade and commerce was well understood and accepted. In the village milieu, the moneylender provided liquidity to the poor farmers who offered gold and silver jewelry as collateral. A discount rate was agreed upon between the lender and the borrower. Since the borrower was usually in dire need of cash, the discount rate was exorbitant,

sometimes as high as 8% per month. More often than not, the farmer was unable to pay the interest, and lost his jewelry to the lender within a year. The difference in the value of the jewelry and the original amount lent was the “profit” made by the lender. This “profit” was about one hundred per cent per year!

In the Byzantine world, where trade routes from many nations crossed, moneychangers were active in the temples down to the times of Jesus. Their primary function was to buy and sell currencies from the various kingdoms depending on the amount of precious metal in the currency. A discount was applied to the transactions. The moneychanger also provided cash at interest to merchants against the collateral of their goods. If the merchant was successful, he paid back the loan; if he was not, he forfeited his goods to the moneylender.

From the perspective of Islamic history, an understanding of the role of interest takes on importance because the economic institutions that grew up in Europe in the 18 th and 19 th centuries accumulated further clout in the twentieth century, and came to dominate the globe. The issue transcends the Islamic world, and affects it only because it is now a part of a global community of poorer nations. Whether it is coffee, coconut, spices or oil, the international banks have a major influence on the economic sinews of the world. Interest payments are a major factor in the enormous flow of capital from the poorer countries of the world to the richer nations. In our own times, between the years 1980 and 1990, no less than 1.3 trillion U.S. dollars were transferred from the poorer countries to the richer countries. The interest economy rules the world, and whether the mullah or the alim likes it or not, he is a part of it.

The rise in the power of commercial banks in the 18th century was directly related to the Industrial Revolution in England. It was a convergence of several historical events that transformed England from a mercantile society to an industrial society and finally led to the triumph of the bankers. The arrival of fresh capital from Calcutta and Oudh (1757-1767) enhanced the substantial wealth that was flowing in from the Atlantic slave trade, and enabled the funding of innovative ideas. Inventions need capital to see the light of day. Without it, they wither and die. The first thrust of British innovation was the replacement of cotton goods from India. The spinning jenny went through rapid modifications and was “perfected”



in 1767 by Hargraves. The colonization of Bengal provided a large captive market of thirty million consumers. The British East India Company slopped on a hefty 70% duty on Indian made goods while opening the floodgates to imports from England. British cotton goods inundated the Indian market, displacing the traditional products of Bengal.

The use of coal and the invention of the steam engine speeded up mechanization. Economies of scale dictated that large farms were more efficient than small ones. The small farmers lost out in the economic competition and moved to the cities in hordes where they became maids, butlers and laborers manning the engines of the industrial revolution. Consolidation of capital intensified. Investment increased, industrial production rose driven by demand from the colonies, profits shot up and merchant entrepreneurs transformed themselves into industrialists.

Behind this profound transformation was a change in the social paradigm. The Battle of Plassey (1757) demonstrated that the age of soldier-kings was over. From times immemorial, the merchant had depended for his protection on the soldier. After the Battle of Plassey, the tables turned and the soldier was to be a servant of the merchant and his hired hand. Civilizational initiative passed from the soldier to the merchant. Robert Clive, the shrewd merchant, had outfoxed Siraj ad Dawlah, the soldier-king. Henceforth, money and manipulation would triumph over the sword, and the genius of the age would turn its attention to the accumulation of wealth, not the conquest of territory.

The British rapidly consolidated their hold on the Indian subcontinent after the Battle of Plassey. Tippu Sultan and his father Hyder Ali resisted the British for more than 40 years. But from a global perspective, it was only a rearguard action. The tide of power had inexorably turned in favor of Europe. Tippu fell in 1799 at the Battle of Srirangapatam, the same year that Napoleon occupied Egypt. By the year 1806, the Moghul court in India was all but a vassal of the East India Company. Tippu was the last soldier-king in Asia. He fell, defeated by merchants or their mercenaries, whose principal weapons were money, bluff, and duplicity, which were often packaged as diplomacy.

The wealth of Bengal did not stay in the hands of English entrepreneurs for long. Within a span of 50 years, the keys to the treasuries of capitalist

England passed from the merchants to the bankers. This transformation was so profound that it affected not just Europe but the entire globe.

The Industrial Revolution and the acceleration of international trade required an increase in monetary liquidity. The value of a currency was determined by its gold or silver content. In the halcyon pre-industrial age, an international merchant, upon completion of his sale, would deposit his money in local currency with a banker and receive from him a note. Upon returning to his own country, the merchant would cash in his note from an agent of the banker. For his service, the banker charged a discount. Such banks were well established in the principal cities of Europe, in London, Antwerp, Paris, Florence, Venice and Genoa. Since currency was based on gold and silver, an increase in the amount of currency in circulation required an increase in the supply of the precious metals. The availability of gold and silver thus put a limit on monetary liquidity, and hence on the amount of trade.

New mechanisms were therefore devised to reduce the liquidity crunch and to enhance trade. The bankers had found from their experience that their depositors required only a portion of their deposits for their current use. The difference between deposits and withdrawals was available to be loaned to customers on a short-term basis. A banker could thus lend out a sum larger than the amount of deposits and earn interest on it. This was the origin of the credit system in England. The assumption in these transactions was that the depositors would not cash in their deposits all at the same time. If they did, the bank would be unable to pay them, and would go under.

Historically, the credit system was not a new invention. In the year 1280, Kublai Khan of China minted leather coins to increase liquidity and enhance trade. In 1335, Emperor Muhammed bin Tughlaq did the same in India. We know from the accounts of the Tughlaq dynasty that the Delhi experiment was a failure because the Indians, Hindus and Muslims alike, sabotaged the effort by minting bogus coins and flooding the market. The Emperor had to abandon his innovative idea and redeem the leather currency at enormous expense to the royal treasury.

The leverage on capital that the credit system provided the bankers was not popular with everyone. Not only could the banker lend out money that he did not have; he charged interest on it. One could see that it enabled the bankers to increase their wealth in relation to the merchants. The payments

that were made to retire the credit came back to the banks as additional deposits. The process worked in the direction of economic centralization, with money gravitating towards the banks. Political battles were fought between the merchants and the bankers on the issue of whether credit instruments should have legal recognition. History was on the side of the bankers and provided them with plenty of opportunities to win their case.

The wars between Britain and France, fought on and off between 1689 and 1815 for control of trade routes, were enormously costly. England was broke and approached the bankers for financing. In 1694, by mutual agreement, the Bank of England agreed to offer a perpetual loan of 1.2 million pounds at 8% interest to the British Crown, in return for certain privileges. These included the authority to handle public lotteries, accept deposits, discount bills, and most important, put its own notes into circulation.

This was the first recognition of the negotiability of credit. In effect it meant that the Bank could create money, a privilege that had hitherto resided only with the kings.

Monetary policy passed on to the bankers who could either fuel an expansion by increasing the supply of money and easing credit, or cause a contraction by withholding credit. This was a fundamental paradigm shift. From times immemorial, one of the essential privileges of a sovereign soldier-king was his authority to mint coins. This privilege now passed on to the bankers, although they printed money in the name of their sovereign. While the expansion of credit encouraged spending and expanded trade, this very action could fuel inflation. Conversely, the withholding of credit, and a tightening of the money supply, made it difficult for debtors to make payments on their debt, and they were forced to sell their assets at a discount to meet their debt obligations. In addition, as long as the standard of currency was gold, the bank could demand payment in gold whose supply was affected by war and was subject to monetary manipulation by the bankers themselves.

This is what opens up banking to charges of exploitation. The merchant makes his money when the value of his goods relative to the money he has borrowed goes up over time. The usurer, on the other hand, makes his money when the value of the credit he has advanced goes up in relation to the goods that are held in mortgage. Thus it is in the usurer's interest to

ensure that your property is worth less tomorrow than it is today so that he can get more of it when payment is due.

A credit advance of 1.2 million pounds in 1694 did not solve the cash requirements of the British throne. The protracted struggle with France for control of trade routes in India and America required enormous funds. England tried increased taxation and lost the American colonies in the process (1776-1783). The French revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic wars (1797-1810) were enormously expensive and financially exhausted the nations of Europe. The countries of Europe borrowed heavily from the bankers who were more than willing to fund the wars with cheap credit thanks to the gold from India and the silver from the Americas. The system worked to the advantage of the bankers.

By 1810, the merchants, the landowners, the producers and the governments were all beholden to the bankers and at their mercy. But when the Mexican War of Independence erupted (1810-1813), the flow of American silver suffered a disruption, a scarcity of precious metals developed, and there was a credit crunch in Europe. The bankers demanded payment in precious metal, which was in short supply. Panic set in and individuals as well as nations were brought to their knees.

The merchants and the old landed aristocracy put up a fight against the gold standard. But the legislative battles in the English Parliament were finally won by the bankers with the Bank Act of 1846, which conferred legal recognition on the negotiability of credit documents.

For more than a century, until 1972, when the United States abandoned the gold standard, those who controlled the gold, controlled the monetary veins of the world. The concentration of wealth with a few bankers increased. The banks literally controlled the jugular veins of the economy. In principle, the process worked like this: First, easy credit enticed borrowers who received advances against collateral goods and real property. But when credit was tightened, liquidity suffered, and there was insufficient currency to make payments on debts. The debtors dropped prices on their properties, so that they could sell their real assets and continue to make debt payments. The economy thus moved in boom-bust cycles, in which each bust cycle devoured the fruits of human labor and created additional poverty. Major contractions in the British economy were recorded in 1815,

1825, 1847, 1857, 1866, 1893 and 1929. The last one caused a global depression and was a contributory cause for the Second World War.

The disengagement of the world monetary system from the gold standard did not change the fundamental relationship between creditor and debtor. Whether the standard is gold, the American dollar, the British Pound or the Japanese Yen, the process remains unchanged. Credit, with interest, works to the advantage of the lender in favor of economic centralization. The rich keep getting richer, while the poor sink deeper into poverty. Critics may suggest this position as too simplistic inasmuch as governments can and do tax concentrations of wealth. But taxation mitigates the concentration of wealth; it does not eliminate it. Interest and credit continue to favor the creditor at the expense of the debtor.

What is true for individuals and nations is also true at the international level. Bereft of capital, the emerging countries of the world turned to international bankers for loans after the Second World War. The credit system increased the span of control of the international bankers over the entire globe. New mechanisms of international credit were created through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Loans were offered against the natural wealth of the borrower nations (commodities such as coffee, jute, oil, bananas, spices) as collateral. Commodity prices fluctuate in response to natural causes, war, pestilence, man-made disasters or political manipulation. Should commodity prices go down, the borrower nations couldn't make payments on their debt. The result is the same should the bankers tighten credit. To encourage their exports, and earn foreign currency, the debtor nations drop the prices of their export goods. The richer nations move in and acquire more of the poor nation's resources at bargain prices. To continue debt financing, the bankers often force the poorer nations to devalue their currencies and accept international oversight of their economies. The cycle continues. The poorer nations keep getting poorer while economic centralization proceeds at the global level.

The issue of credit and interest is a major element in the continuing negotiation between the civilization of Islam and the global economic system. Indeed, it is a major item of negotiation between the richer and poorer nations of the world.

Summarily, the credit system that evolved in England in the latter part of the 18th century worked to the advantage of the banker and accelerated

economic centralization. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the credit system was expanded to embrace the entire globe and has worked in the direction of continuing centralization of wealth in favor of the creditor nations. In the next chapter, we illustrate how the international credit system determined the geopolitics of the 19th century using Egypt and the Suez Canal as an example.

## **Egypt and the Suez Canal**

Egypt is where the two giant continents of Asia and Africa meet. South of the Jordan valley the landscape of West Asia changes to the harsh desert of the Sinai. Dust storms rise up in the desert, blowing their way through the wasteland, making it difficult for man or beast to survive. At Suez, this harsh land meets up with the equally harsh eastern desert in Egypt. It is barely a hundred miles, as the crow flies, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the mouth of the Gulf of Suez. Yet, these few miles have separated not just two bodies of water, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, but two distinct historical regions. The Mediterranean region has its own distinct history as does the Indian Ocean region, which jets into the Gulf of Suez through the Red Sea. South of Suez, the Sinai becomes a rugged terrain, rising into the lofty Al Ajmali Mountains. This was the land through which Prophet Moses wandered for forty years, and it was the land where God spoke to man.

The civilizations of the Mediterranean and those of the Indian Ocean have interacted and traded with each other through the centuries. Egypt, sitting astride two continents, radiated its influence westwards into North Africa, south into the Sudan, east into the Red Sea basin, and north into the Syrian highlands. With its strategic position, it commanded the trade routes to North Africa, Europe and Asia. Goods from the Mediterranean basin were unloaded at Alexandria, transported by land to Suez, and ferried again by sea to the littoral regions of the Indian Ocean, including Yemen, Persia, India, Indonesia and China. The rulers of Egypt, since the time of the Pharaohs, had pondered the possibility of connecting the two regions by digging a canal across the Suez area. The sheer magnitude of the task was overwhelming, and the dream remained unfulfilled until recent times when the use of machinery increased the ability of man to subdue nature.

With the European discovery of trade routes to the Indian Ocean around the Cape of Good Hope, the strategic importance of Egypt increased. Specifically, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as France and England fought for influence and colonies in the Indian subcontinent, Egypt acquired added

importance. Napoleon landed in Egypt in 1798, ostensibly to free the Egyptians from despotic rule, but his eyes were further east, on India. The French contingent easily defeated the Turkish-Egyptian garrison under Murad Bey at the Battle of the Pyramids and occupied Cairo. Egypt was a province of the Ottoman Empire. In response to the French invasion, the Ottoman Sultan Selim III declared war on France. Britain, which was at war with France, supported the Ottomans. Napoleon was bottled up in Cairo and his fleet was defeated by the British at the Battle of the Nile. Napoleon's grand plan was to strike at India through Syria and Iraq. With this in view he started correspondence with Tippu Sultan of Mysore (India) and the Sultan of Oman. However, his attempts to punch through Ottoman lines in Syria were frustrated when Turkish forces held their line at the Battle of Heliopolis (1800). Meanwhile, the British had successfully stormed Srirangapatam (1799), capital of Mysore, and Tippu had died in battle. Frustrated, Napoleon retreated to France, leaving behind him a large number of scholars, administrators and French chefs.

British strategic interest in Egypt grew in proportion to the consolidation of the British Empire in India. The British tried both diplomacy and war to gain a foothold on the Nile. However, its initial attempts met with failure. After the withdrawal of Napoleon, the Ottomans returned, and with the Treaty of El Arish, the British were forced to withdraw their naval contingents from the Nile. In 1805, Mohammed Ali, an ambitious and capable Albanian in the Ottoman garrison in Egypt, rose to become the Turkish Governor. He instituted reforms in the Egyptian administration and built up the Ottoman-Egyptian garrison into one of the finest fighting machines in the Mediterranean. When the British attempted to capture Alexandria in 1807, Muhammed

Ali successfully beat back the assault. To counter British ambitions, Muhammed Ali cultivated the French, and used their services in the continued modernization of Egypt.

As long as Muhammed Ali was the Ottoman Viceroy, British ambitions in Egypt were kept at bay. However, Egypt could not remain isolated from the expanding European colonial juggernaut. Napoleon's invasion had shown the military vulnerability of the Ottomans. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, the Mediterranean was the focus of rivalry between the competing interests of the European powers. The interests of Britain,



France, Russia and Austria-Hungary converged in the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, but collided as to who would pick up the pieces once the Ottomans had left. The British had their paramount interest in Egypt as the gateway to the British Indian Empire and the Indian Ocean. The Empire of Austria-Hungary was interested in the Balkans and kept up its steady pressure south of the Danube. The French occupied Algeria in 1830 and had ambitions in Morocco and Tunisia. The Russians were devouring Ottoman territories in the Caucasus and the Black Sea region. Their geopolitical goal was the occupation of Istanbul and the control of the Bosphorus Straits so that their navy would have access to warm waters. A projection of Russian power into the Mediterranean would threaten French and British ambitions in North Africa and West Asia. So, they cooperated in containing Russia even while they themselves nibbled at the Ottoman Empire from the south. Greece was encouraged to secede from the Ottoman Empire (1820), but when the Ottomans decided to challenge European naval supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean, war ensued. Britain, France and Russia formed an alliance and their combined navies defeated the Ottomans in an engagement off the coast of Cyprus (1827). Thereafter, the Mediterranean became a European naval preserve.

In the year 1845, Egypt technically remained an Ottoman province although Mohammed Ali Pasha, through a series of diplomatic and military moves, had won increasing concessions from the Porte in Istanbul making the province autonomous. Notwithstanding the circumnavigation of Africa, and the diversion of Indian Ocean trade through the Cape of Good Hope, Egypt was still an important trading center between the Mediterranean region and South Asia. The Nile Delta produced a large amount of grain so that Egypt could feed its own population and generate a net surplus for the other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Mohammed Ali introduced the cultivation of cotton, sugar and tobacco, which brought cash into the treasury. Cairo was an important cultural center, as the former seat of the Abbasid Caliphate, and as a transit point for hajjis from North and Central Africa.

Things changed when Muhammed Ali Pasha died, and Abbas I became the Governor (1849). Alarmed at French ambitions in North Africa, Abbas I cultivated the British as a counterweight to French encroachments. Britain was only too willing to oblige. The British East India Company had, by

1845, consolidated its Indian Empire. The Sikhs in the Punjab were defeated in 1845, and British horizons had expanded beyond the Indus River to the Northwest Frontier and Afghan territories. Russian advances in Central Asia had caused an alarm in India, and the British wished to create a buffer state in Afghanistan. Preservation of the Indian Empire, and safeguarding the Indian Ocean trade, were the driving forces behind British diplomacy in the 19th century. To show their appreciation for the overtures of Abbas I, the British offered to build a railroad from Alexandria to Cairo, an offer that was gladly accepted. Construction of this railroad began in 1851 and was completed in 1854. By mutual agreement, it was then extended to Suez. Goods could now be transported by sea from the Indian Ocean up the Red Sea through the Gulf of Suez, unloaded at the port city of Suez, transported by train to Alexandria, reloaded on ships and transported to London and Liverpool. Britain had now won through diplomacy what it could not win through war, namely, the capability to transport merchandise to and from its Indian Empire, through the Egyptian railroads.

The French were upset at this advantage gained by Britain while it was they who had worked so hard since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte to cultivate influence in Egypt. Their opportunity came when Sait Pasha became the Viceroy of Egypt (1854). The French Engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps had cultivated the friendship of successive Egyptian governors, and in 1854 made a diplomatic coup when he won a concession from Ibrahim Pasha to construct the Suez Canal. It was to be a joint enterprise with shares in the Suez Canal Company held by the Egyptian governor and de Lesseps. The French were to supply machinery while the Pasha guaranteed an unlimited supply of conscripted Egyptian labor.

It is at this point that the story of the Suez Canal and the colonization of Egypt begin. Even while Sait Pasha and de Lesseps made their agreement, and celebrated it with tea parties in Cairo, international events were overtaking those in Egypt. Continued and uncompromising Russian pressure on the Ottomans had led to the Crimean War (1853-1856). The task of defending the Empire against relentless European encroachments had exhausted the Ottoman treasury. The Porte in Istanbul was forced to take its first public loan from European bankers in 1854 at an enormous discount. The debt continued to mount in succeeding years through accrued interest and additional loans. The noose was about to tighten on the Ottoman

Empire. By 1875, Ottoman public debts were in excess of 200 million British pounds. At an interest of 6% per annum these debts required more than 12 million pounds per year to service them. This amount was almost 50% of all Ottoman revenues. The burden of debt made it more difficult to modernize the Empire through the Tanzeemat reforms. The inexorable process of economic centralization in favor of the European bankers had begun, leading to an equally inexorable process of political and economic contraction of the Ottomans.

The merchant-barons of Europe were now armed with a silent weapon, credit, whose power was far greater than that of the mightiest cannon in Napoleon's armory. They could walk in, take over entire nations, and dismantle empires, sometimes without even firing a single shot.

Ottoman financial troubles spilled over to Egypt, since Egypt was as yet an Ottoman province. The Egyptian Pasha could not pay the expense for the continued excavation of the Suez Canal. Work that had started in 1857 proceeded intermittently with frequent work stoppages.

In 1863, Ismail Pasha succeeded Sait Pasha as the governor of Egypt. Educated, but vain and foolish, Ismail was the man who pushed Egypt into the arms of the European bankers. The European banks offered a loan to Egypt for the completion of the canal against a collateral of Egyptian long fiber cotton. Demand for Egyptian cotton was high because the Civil War in America (1861-1865) had cut off the supply of American cotton to world markets. The loan was pushed through; the Canal was completed, and was opened in 1869 with much fanfare by Queen Eugenie of France. But as it turned out, the celebrations were premature.

The inauguration of the Canal was to become the opening gambit in the colonization of Egypt. The American Civil War ended in 1865, and the bottom fell out of the world cotton market. The price of Egyptian cotton dropped 400% between 1865 and 1869. Quite oblivious of the mounting financial crisis, Ismail Pasha accepted from Ottoman Sultan Abdel Aziz (1861-1875) the burden of guarding the Ottoman harbors in Eritrea on the Red Sea. In addition, to gain the hereditary title of Khedive, the Pasha agreed to pay additional tribute to the Sultan. In 1875, the Pasha even attempted an unsuccessful invasion of Ethiopia. These misadventures, together with Ismail's extravagant life style and his attempts to accelerate the modernization of Egypt, made Egypt bankrupt. Ismail tried increased

taxation and public borrowings but these proved insufficient to meet the expenditures. In desperation, in 1875, Ismail Pasha sold off his shares in the Suez Canal Company to the British in partial payment of his debts. Even this desperate measure proved insufficient, and the mounting financial crisis forced Ismail to suspend all payments on foreign debt. The European bankers brought the matter before the mixed courts in Alexandria for arbitration. The courts ruled in favor of the bankers, forced Ismail to give up some of his personal assets, and to accept a Commission on Egyptian Public Debt with the power to confiscate revenues from tobacco, railroads and excise taxes. Egyptian finances were put under two controllers appointed by Britain and France. The emasculation of Egypt was complete.

England and France tried to leverage their hold on Egypt to strangle the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, they orchestrated an “International

Conference” in Istanbul where they offered to relieve Egypt of its debt burden provided the Ottoman Sultan accepted the liability for these loans. Istanbul was already in debt up to its neck. In 1881, the European powers had set up the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, and in return for a reduction of debt from 191 million British pounds to 106 million pounds, had obtained concessions from Istanbul to attach specific revenues for debt servicing. The burden of the Egyptian debt would have completely overwhelmed the Ottomans. Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1908) wisely declined to take the bait, giving the Empire a new lease for a few more decades. The attempt to use Egypt as a bait to occupy the Ottoman Empire was not given up until 1885, when Sir Drummond Wolff was sent to Istanbul to transfer Egyptian control back to the Ottomans, provided the Sultan accepted the liability for the Egyptian debt. This attempt, too, ended in failure, thanks to the foresight of Sultan Abdul Hamid.

Financial control inevitably leads to political control. In 1878, the Europeans forced an “International Ministry” on Cairo headed by an Armenian, Nubar Pasha, with British oversight over the ministry of finance and French oversight over the ministry of public works. Resentment against foreign intervention built up and there was a mutiny in the Egyptian armed forces in 1879. A national movement sprang up, led by a political party, Hizb al Watan. It became the dominant political force in the Assembly of Delegates, an institution that had been established by Muhammed Ali Pasha as part of his reform processes earlier in the century. In response to the

Egyptian outcry, the Europeans tightened the noose and made demands for the immediate liquidation of their loans. When Ismail Pasha demurred and attempted to replace the foreigners in the ministry with Egyptians, he was forced to abdicate in favor of his incompetent son, Tawfiq Pasha. To placate the Europeans, Tawfiq dissolved the Assembly of Delegates and attempted to rule by decree. Protests and street demonstrations erupted in Cairo and Alexandria against this arbitrary exercise of power.

Unable to control the political process, the Europeans made their military move. In 1882, a combined British and French naval force appeared at Alexandria. When this show of force proved insufficient, the British, acting alone without French participation, bombarded Alexandria into submission. From there the British force moved on Cairo. The nationalist forces put up a stiff resistance but were defeated at the Battle of Tel el Kabir (1882). Cairo was in British hands.

Control of Egypt meant control of the Nile River. Using Egypt as their base, the British moved up the Nile to occupy the Sudan and Khartoum. Sudanese resistance to British penetration was led by the Mahdi (1884), but it was crushed by superior British firepower. Egypt remained under British occupation until 1912 when it became a British Protectorate. An Anglo-French consortium was set up to control and run the Suez Canal, and it continued to operate until Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Canal in 1956.

The construction of the Suez Canal and the colonization of Egypt bring out the sharp contrast in the horizons of the Sultans and emirs of Muslim lands and the merchants and bankers of Europe. The Sultans and emirs operated in the past and had no idea of the changed global paradigm in which Europe operated. With the exception of Tippu Sultan of Mysore (d. 1799) their vision was limited to their own environment and their own kingdoms. They were unaware of global currents that were shaping the destinies of nations. Certainly, they proved themselves incompetent in the fields of international economics and finance. By contrast, the Europeans had a global reach. They understood the economic and political interplay between developments in one part of the world and another. When Ismail Pasha committed himself to a loan for the construction of the Suez Canal, he overlooked the fact that the inflated prices for Egyptian cotton were a consequence of the Civil War in America. The Civil War would end one day

and the inflated prices would surely collapse. Neither could he comprehend that the credit system that he was submitting to would ultimately devour his country. Europe had entered the post-mercantile era, and was run by bankers armed with the credit mechanism whose global reach knew no national boundaries. The Sultans and emirs were still operating in the age of the soldier-kings. It would take another hundred years before the Muslim world would make a serious attempt to understand the west and the internal mechanics of its institutions.

# RESISTANCE AND REFORM

## *Summary*

*The social religious caldron of the 18th century, with power slipping from the hands of the Muslims, gave birth to the reform movements of the era. The spiritual decay was as obvious in cosmopolitan Delhi as it was in the deserts of Arabia and the madrasas of Nigeria. Islam, with its universal genius, and its innate capacity for self-renewal, produced mujaddids who sought to stem the tide of decay. Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Shaykh Abdul Wahhab of Arabia and Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye of West Africa were typical of these great reformers. They tried to arrest the moral decay among the Muslims and bring them back to the pristine purity of Islam. However, these reformers did not address the interface of the Islamic civilization with the West. This task was left to the reformers of the 19th and 20th centuries.*

*The Ottoman Tanzeemat reforms made an attempt to modernize the administration, educational system and communications of the empire. These reforms found their fulfillment in the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. However, the Tanzeemat were victims of their own success. The Ottomans could not contain the storms created by rising nationalisms and the machinations of foreign powers. In India, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh saw the future of Muslims in their educational upliftment. His initiatives gave birth to the first modernist movement in the subcontinent.*

*On the military front, the injection of British rule into India met a fierce resistance in the person of Tippu Sultan of Mysore who held the British at bay for forty years. But India was in an advanced state of political and social implosion, and the British won, taking advantage of deep fissures in the fabric of Indian politics.*

## **Tippu Sultan, Soldier, Visionary**

The year 1799 marks a watershed on the Islamic calendar. It was the year that Napoleon landed his troops in Egypt. It was also the year that the British stormed the Fort of Srirangapatam, and the curtain fell on Islamic rule in India. The first event, the landing of French troops in Ottoman Egypt, confirmed the superiority of European arms and organization over the Ottomans. The second, the fall of Mysore, completed the political implosion of India and the consolidation of the British Empire. British arms did not conquer India. It fell apart through its own internal divisions and was handed over to the British by individual traitors.

Tippu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore in South India, lived in an age of momentous changes in global history. He was a contemporary of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Voltaire, Louis XVI, George III and Napoleon Bonaparte. In more ways than one, the paths of these historical figures crossed those of Tippu. It is an irony of history that the triumph of George Washington and the independence of America had an impact on the military fortunes of Tippu Sultan in far-away Mysore. After the British General Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington at the Battle of Yorktown (1781), he returned to England and was hired by the East India Company. It was Cornwallis who organized a sustained and determined political and military offensive against Tippu Sultan that finally contained the Sultans explosive energies.

Tippu's life spanned a period when new ideas and new institutions transformed the landscape of Europe and North America, while Asia recoiled from within. It was the age of the Industrial Revolution. Starting with the invention of the steam engine in 1758, Europe forged ahead in consolidating its technological superiority over the rest of the world. It was the age of the American Revolution (1776) and the eloquent assertion of the rights of man by Thomas Jefferson. It was also the age of the French Revolution (1789) and the abolition of oppressive feudalism in continental



Europe. Tippu's existential vision reached out to the ideas in these momentous changes. But he lived in an environment that had lost its social, political and spiritual vitality, and he was done-in by his own people, while America and Europe moved forward to the modern age.

Tippu, son of Hyder Ali, was born in 1750 at Devanahalli and was named after Tippu Mastan Awliya of Arcot, to whose tomb his mother had made a pilgrimage. Tippu's forefather Shaykh Wali Muhammed, a sufi of the Chishtiya order from the Punjab, was ordered south by his teacher to serve the area of Gulbarga near the modern city of Bangalore, where the tomb of Shaykh Gaysu Daraz (d. 1410) is located. Shaykh Wali's grandson Fath Muhammed served, for a while, as a commander in the armies of the Nawab of Arcot during the reign of Aurangzeb (d. 1707). Fath Muhammed migrated further inland, and found himself in the service of the Nawab of Sira, where he married the daughter of the Shaykh of Tanjore. While living in the village of Devanahalli, a son was born to the couple, and he was named Muhammed Ali. This lad, growing up in a soldier's family, showed his mettle early in his career, and soon found himself as a platoon commander in the service of the Raja of Mysore.

The political landscape of India changed while Fath Muhammed was in the service of the Nawab of Sira. Between 1680 and 1690, Moghul armies under Emperor Aurangzeb swept through southern India and extended their sway almost to the tip of the peninsula. Following the death of Aurangzeb (1707), there emerged no successor capable of holding the vast empire together. The provincial governors, while paying lip service to the lordship of the Emperor, asserted their independence. In 1722, Nizam ul Mulk, Asif Jah I, was sent to Golkunda (modern Hyderabad) as the governor of the southern provinces. The Nizam skillfully manipulated his affairs so that the governorship of the area became hereditary, and his descendants came to be known as the Nizams of Hyderabad. His official title was the subedar (provincial governor) of Deccan. This province was rich and vast, comprising an area larger than England, and included all territories contiguous to the modern metropolitan cities of Hyderabad, Bangalore and Madras. It had an income of over 200 million rupees, which was roughly a fifth of the entire income of the Moghul Empire.

For administrative purposes, the suba (province) of Hyderabad was divided into two sub-districts, each one governed by a nawab (the literal

meaning of the word in Farsi is a “deputy”. The English corrupted it to nabob.). The first sub-district was Sira, located 60 miles west of modern Bangalore. Sira was the administrative capital of Mysore and the coastal areas of Malabar, including the rich trading centers of Cochin and Mangalore. The other sub-district was Arcot, located 200 miles southeast of Hyderabad, which administered the coastal areas on the east coast included in modern Telangana and Madras.

Meanwhile, a strong power had emerged in western India. The Marathas, arising out of the hills around Poona, were welded into an effective fighting force by Shivaji. By 1720, they were in effective control of west central India and were elbowing their way east into the Nizam’s territories, pushing their way north towards the heartland of the Moghul territories. Like the Nizams of Hyderabad, the Marathas too evolved a hereditary line of succession called the Peshwas.

The political disintegration of the Moghul Empire was an opportunity for the European powers. The British East India Company, set up in 1600 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, had established its “factories” in three areas: Madras (1640), Bombay (1649) and Calcutta (1670). The French, following on the heels of the English, had their own Compagnie des Indes Orientales, and set up their “factory” at Pondicherry on the Bay of Bengal, about 100 miles south of Madras. The global rivalry between the French and the British, which had intense moments in West Africa and North America, spilled over into the Indian Ocean and India.

The first opportunity for European intervention in Indian affairs came from Hyderabad. Following the death of Asif Jah I, disagreements arose among his descendants, and open warfare erupted. In 1749, it pitted Nasir Jung, second son of the Nizam, against Muzaffar Jung, a grandson. At about the same time, a struggle arose for the Nawabship of Arcot (modern Tamil Nadu) between Muhammed Ali and Chanda Saheb. These fateful struggles dragged in the French, the British and the Mysoreans. The British sided with Nasir Jung and Muhammad Ali, while the French championed Muzaffar Jung and Chanda Saheb. Since Mysore was a part of the suba of Hyderabad, Nasir Jung requisitioned a contingent of 15,000 troops from Mysore. Hyder Ali was a part of this contingent. He distinguished himself in combat, and upon his return, was made a regional commander by the Raja of Mysore.

The contests in Hyderabad and Arcot ended in favor of the British. The French Governor Dupleix was outwitted by the British Governor Robert Clive, and returned to France a disheartened man. A few years later, the British gained a decisive advantage in India as a result of their victory over the Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey (1757). The Anglo-French wars, fought on and off for twenty years on the global stage, came to an end with the Treaty of Paris (1763) by which the French washed their hands of India and essentially gave up their struggle in North America.

Meanwhile, the wheels of fortune turned. In 1761, the Afghan Emir, Ahmed Shah Abdali, at the Battle of Panipat, crushed the Maratha armies, which had penetrated as far north as Lahore in the Punjab. The Marathas, recoiling from the tremendous loss of manpower in the battle (some historians put this loss at over 150,000 men), recalled their armed forces dispersed over the subcontinent. Mysore, which had suffered periodic invasions from the Marathas, was a beneficiary. In 1762, the Mysore armies under Hyder Ali expelled the Marathas. By 1765, Hyder Ali had become the de-facto power in Mysore, while the Raja and his family receded into the background. The rising power of Mysore roiled the Nizam, the Marathas, and the British alike. In addition, the continuing contest for succession in Arcot provided plenty of opportunity for alliances and counter alliances. The result was a series of wars, with Mysore as the central player in the test of arms.

The first Mysore War was fought between August 1767 and March 1768, with the British championing the cause of the profligate Muhammed Ali, Nawab of Arcot, while Hyder Ali of Mysore championed the cause of Mahfuz Khan, elder brother of Muhammed Ali. The fickle Nizam at first supported Hyder but changed sides when he heard that the Marathas were planning an attack on him, and joined up with the British instead. It was in the First Mysore War that Tippu, at the age of seventeen, first showed his mettle. He was in charge of a regiment assigned to him by his father, Hyder Ali. Within a month of the start of hostilities, Tippu's forces rode up to the very gates of Madras. On September 28, 1767, the British Governor Bouchier, the Board of Governors of the Company, as well as Muhammed Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, were in the Madras gardens when Tippu's cavalry came charging up. Tippu would have arrested them all were it not for a small boat that happened to be in the waters off the gardens and provided

them a narrow escape. The Mysore armies were victorious on all fronts, in the east near Madras, and in the west along the coast of Malabar. The war ended when Hyder Ali mounted a second assault on Madras in March 1768 and dictated peace terms to the Madras Governor. The Treaty of Madras (1769) called for a return of captured territories by both sides, and each side promised to help the other in the event of an attack from a third party.

The peace treaty was tested when the Marathas invaded Mysore the following year and the British, untrue to their covenant, refused to help Hyder Ali. The breach of faith left an enduring legacy of distrust of the British in the young Tippu. The Maratha armies raided all the way to Srirangapatam, but withdrew when the stout resistance of Tippu frustrated their assault. The next eight years were of intermittent warfare between Mysore with the Marathas and the Nizam. The victorious team of father and son (Hyder Ali and Tippu) extended the frontiers of Mysore to the shores of the Krishna River, pushing back both the Marathas and the Nizam. It was during this period, in 1773, that Tippu married Ruqayya Banu, daughter of an army general. Ruqayya

Banu became the future queen of Mysore and was the mother of Tippu's sons.

Global events overtook the military contests in India. In 1776, the American colonies declared their independence from England. War erupted, George Washington took command of the American troops and British resources were stretched to the limit. In one of these battles, a loyalist force under General Cornwallis surrendered to General Washington at Yorktown (1781). Cornwallis retired to England, where the East India Company hired him. It was Cornwallis who orchestrated a determined political and military campaign in the Third Mysore War (1789-1792) to contain Tippu Sultan. The French sided with the Americans in the War of Independence. In retaliation, England declared war on France, and seized the French colonies of Pondicherry (on the Bay of Bengal) and Mahe (on the Arabian Sea) in India. The seizure of Mahe on the Malabar Coast annoyed Hyder Ali since it was a primary conduit for the Mysore spice trade with West Asia and Europe.

At about the same time, the Marathas were upset with the British over their intervention in court affairs at Poona over succession issues. The Nizam, that perennial weathercock in Indian politics at that time, also

viewed the British with disfavor because they had captured Guntur and given it to their satrap, Muhammed Ali of Arcot.

The confluence of these events resulted in an unusual alignment of Indian forces against the British. By now, the Indian potentates were alert to the machinations of the East India Company. They had seen how the British had brought the Bengal economy to its knees after the Battle of Plassey (1757), imposing unbearable taxes on local products while flooding the market with cheap British goods. They were alarmed at the British victory at Buxor (1764) over the combined forces of Bengal, Oudh and the Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam. They had also witnessed how the British had starved the Begums of Oudh to surrender their state jewels (1765). A blueprint for British domination over India was apparent. In 1780, an understanding was reached between Hyder Ali of Mysore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Marathas, to “liberate” India from the British. The French, always on the lookout for another opportunity to get into Indian politics, warmly welcomed this treaty. The combined forces of Mysore and Hyderabad were to attack Madras while the Maratha forces would challenge the British in Bombay and Bengal.

The Mysore forces were the first in battle. The causes for war were provided by the refusal of the British to hand over border territories as agreed to in the Treaty of Madras and by their march over Mysore territories in their attack on French Mahe. In July 1780, Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan marched into Madras at the head of a host of 80,000 seasoned troops. Opposing them was General Munroe, who had earned his fame as the Commander of British forces that had defeated the combined armies of Bengal, Oudh and the Moghuls at the Battle of Buxor (1764). To support Munroe, a British brigade was marching up from the south under Colonel Bailey. Tippu caught up with Bailey in September 1780, and at the Battle of Pollipur, utterly demolished it. Colonel Bailey, along with 3,820 British officers and troops, was captured. It was the worst defeat the British suffered on Indian soil. And it was this engagement that made a legend out of Tippu Sultan. Meanwhile, the main Mysore army under Hyder Ali, bested General Munroe, forcing him to abandon his guns and beat a hasty retreat into Fort St. George in Madras.

The Battle of Pollipur demolished the reputation that the British in India were invincible, as was assumed since the Battle of Buxor. It showed that a

disciplined Indian army was more than a match for the Europeans. It also demonstrated that the weapons of war of the Mysore Army were in no way inferior to those of the British. The Mysore Army, 88,000 strong, was organized into regular and irregular troops. A well-trained cavalry corps of 10,000 provided the mobile arm. There were 48,000 regular infantry and 30,000 irregular infantry troops. The regular army was organized into cushoons (divisions), risalas (regiments) and jukhs (companies). Each soldier was supplied with a scepter, a dagger, a musket, and rounds of ammunition. The field guns were of Indian design, cast in brass, and had a longer range than those of the British. This was made possible by the large foundries located near Srirangapatam, as well as precision boring of long barrels achieved with water operated boring mills. In addition, the army had a rocket corps. The Mysore rockets had a deadly range of 1,000 yards, and carried a cartridge filled with gunpowder. It is commonly assumed that by 1799, when Napoleon invaded Egypt, European arms were far superior to those of the armies of Asia. While it is true that the momentum was in favor of Europe thanks to the Industrial Revolution, the technological superiority of Europe over Asia in armaments for land forces was not fully established until after the fall of Mysore.

This credible military force was supported by the financial stability and economic prosperity of the kingdom. Control of the western coastline provided Tippu Sultan with access to the commercial centers of the Indian Ocean and to Europe. Exports included spices, sandalwood, ivory, iron, cloth, silk, brassware, woodwork, and diamonds. Imports included muskets, guns, wool and saltpeter. The balance of trade was almost always in favor of Mysore, so that accounts were current despite the heavy expenditures of war. Food was plentiful. Srirangapatam, Channapatna, Bangalore, and Bidnur were major manufacturing centers while the ports of Mangalore and Cochin were among the busiest in the Indian Ocean.

The Treaty of 1780 between Mysore, Hyderabad and the Marathas, marked a high point in the cooperation between Indian states. It was the closest that the British came to losing their hold on India before the Great Sepoy Uprising of 1857. The Treaty fell apart because India was in an advanced stage of political and social disintegration. None of the princes, except Tippu, had a global vision. And none, except Tippu, could foresee that the British presence was the beginning of a global European thrust that

would swallow up India and Asia. The princes were more concerned with petty issues relating to minor adjustments of their borders, or of succession and pensions, than with the fate of India. Self-interest and intrigue, opportunism and ambition, not ethics, had become the guiding principle of politics. Ethical and spiritual decay had penetrated so deep into Indian politics that princes and generals alike were willing to sell their country for a pittance.

The ancient civilization of India, Hindu and Muslim alike, which had witnessed cycles of glory and decay, was at low ebb. Religious faith was no longer a sufficient binding force, and modern values such as nationalism were unknown. India was up against an expansionist Europe, whose social landscape was being transformed by nascent ideas, new technologies and efficient institutions. The British, with their global reach, had access to far greater resources than any Indian prince could muster. With their efficient intelligence apparatus, they were aware of the intrigues in the Indian courts, and took full advantage of it. The first to abandon the Treaty of 1780 was the Nizam. A mere promise from the British Governor General Warren Hastings that he would not swallow up the district of Guntur was sufficient to change the mind of the Nizam, and he switched sides. Not a single soldier left the city of Hyderabad to participate in the war. The Marathas were the next to quit the alliance when the British promised not to interfere in their internal affairs and to provide military assistance in recovering border territories from Mysore.

Undaunted, the Mysore armies fought, holding the British armies to a draw, in the eastern theater near Madras and in the western theater on the coast of Malabar. In the midst of the Second Mysore War, as the conflict of 1778-1782 is known, Hyder Ali died of cancer (December 1782), and Tippu succeeded him at the age of thirty two. Meanwhile, in far-away America, the War of Independence (1776-1783) ended with a triumph for the colonies. The French had joined the Americans (1778) against the British. In 1783, the French, with their support no longer needed by the Americans, concluded the Peace Treaty of Versailles with the British. Under the terms of this treaty, French and British forces were to disengage throughout the world. Accordingly, the French withdrew their support of Tippu Sultan. Tippu was at the time besieging the British at the port of Mangalore. With the Nizam and the Marathas in the British camp, and the fickle-minded

French on the sidelines, Tippu saw that it was advantageous to conclude the war, even though the military advantage was with him. The Madras Treaty, negotiated through Tippu's ambassadors Appaji Ram and Srinivasa Rao, was signed on March 11, 1784. It stipulated a mutual withdrawal of forces, and an understanding not to aid each other's enemies. The British gained the evacuation of territories on the east coast, which were nominally under their satrap Nawab Muhammed Ali of Arcot, while Mysore gained by frustrating Maratha designs on its northern territories. More importantly, Tippu demonstrated that the British were vulnerable and their position in India was not as secure as had been assumed after the fall of Bengal (1757).

The intrigues of the Indian courts provided the British plenty of opportunity to further their designs on Mysore. Not only were the Indian states quarrelling with one another, the Marathas, the principal power in central India, were divided among themselves. The vast Maratha territories were divided up between competing chiefs, Sindhia in the north, Holkar in the south, Bhosle, Gaekwad and Nana Farnawis in central India. To unseat Tippu, the British started secret correspondence with the Rani of Mysore, who had never given up her claim to her husband's throne. They also incited the Nayars of Travancore to rebel against Tippu's authority.

On a broader front, Mysore relations with the Nizam and the Marathas were always tense because neither the Nizam nor the Marathas recognized the independence of Tippu Sultan, and both claimed the territory of Mysore as their tributary. Between 1784 and 1787, Tippu waged a series of defensive operations against both of these Indian powers, which resulted in the addition of all the territories up to the Krishna River to his dominion. To counter Mysore, the Nizam and the Marathas sought a mutual alliance. When that floundered over mutual territorial claims, they turned to the European powers for help.

As early as 1785, the Maratha court in Poona made overtures to the Bombay government for a military alliance, but was rebuffed because the British were not ready to take on Tippu as yet. The Marathas then made overtures to the French and the Portuguese but this was of no consequence. The British, licking their wounds from the loss of the American colonies, were reluctant, at this time, to get involved in hostilities on behalf of the Indian princes. In addition, they were reluctant to break the Treaty of



Versailles and provide a pretext for the French to get back into the Indian game.

The situation changed with the arrival of Cornwallis in 1785 as Governor General of the East India Company. The loss of the American colonies had freed British manpower and material resources. These resources were now focused on India and on the Indian Ocean. Cornwallis had made a name for himself in the war against the Americans in their War of Independence, although his surrender to George Washington on October 19, 1781 at Yorktown had tarnished that image. As soon as he arrived in India, Cornwallis started preparations for a final confrontation with Tippu Sultan. Methodically, he proceeded to build a military-political alliance to surround and destroy the Kingdom of Mysore.

It was during this period (1786-1787) that Tippu Sultan sent embassies to the Turkish Sultan in Istanbul, Louis XVI of France, the Shah of Persia, the Sultan of Oman, and Zaman Shah of Afghanistan. With a singular passion for expelling the British from India, he tried diplomacy and sought alliances throughout the Islamic world and Europe. Through his ambassador to France, Tippu sought a military alliance as well as help with artisans and military engineers. The reply of Louis XVI was polite but evasive. A similar overture to the Dutch for a defensive alliance in 1788 was rejected. In his representations to the Turkish Sultan, he pleaded for military help against the British and sought the title of Padashah. Muslims around the globe looked upon the Sultan as the Caliph of Islam and its guardian. Only he could bestow legitimacy on the sultans and emirs of Asia and Africa. Tippu was successful in earning the title of Padashah from Istanbul but there was no military help. The reasons for this lay in the European politics of the time. The French Revolution (1789) was soon to engulf France, challenging the authority of kings and despots and most of the European monarchs were about to lose their thrones. The Turkish Sultan, not unaware of these changes and as insurance for his own survival, was careful to cultivate the British as a bulwark against the French. In addition, the Russians were aggressive on the northern Ottoman borders, and the Porte in Istanbul was in no position to help an Indian Padashah in his struggle against the British in far-away India.

Tippu's relations with Persia were cordial. In 1781, during the Second Mysore War, his father Hyder Ali had asked for help from the shah and had

received a contingent of 1,000 troops. But post-Safavid Persia was a minor player on the world scene and was itself on the defensive against the Russians in Azerbaijan. Tippu scored some success with the Sultan of Oman who controlled the coastline of Arabia and East Africa with a credible navy. But after some initial success, British diplomacy successfully isolated Mysore, and concluded a Treaty of Friendship with the Sultan of Oman (1798).

The Nizam and the Marathas viewed the rising power of Mysore with jealousy and suspicion, and Cornwallis had little difficulty in forging a confederacy with them against Tippu. Hostilities began when the Raja of Travancore bought two small principalities from the Dutch. These principalities, Cranganore and Ayakotteh, had been held by another raja, the Raja of Cochin, before the arrival of the Europeans. The Portuguese occupied them in 1511, and lost them to the Dutch circa 1600. By 1780, the Dutch were a waning power in India and had their hands full at home with an incipient revolution. By the sale of these two towns, they wished to raise cash to defray the cost of fending off the French in Europe, but they desired to do so in such a manner that it would embroil Tippu and the British in conflict. The Raja of Cochin had become a tributary of Tippu, and Tippu desired to buy these towns for himself. When the Dutch sold them instead to the Raja of Travancore, friction increased between Mysore and Travancore. As a further provocation, the Raja built fortifications through territories nominally under the control of Mysore. Tippu moved against the Raja, who had an alliance with the British. This provided an excuse for Cornwallis to commence hostilities. Tippu Sultan's overtures to the French and the Turks for military alliances were construed by the British to be directed against them. It is also possible that Cornwallis had a personal stake in the war, to retrieve his reputation after his losses to the Americans at the Battle of Saratoga and his surrender to George Washington at Yorktown. The British feared a repeat of their North American experience in India. In America, French assistance had helped the colonies win their War of Independence (1776-1783) under General Washington. Was it not possible that the Indians would prevail if they followed the example of Tippu Sultan?

Cornwallis went about his task methodically. In March 1790, he entered into a treaty with the Marathas to attack Mysore from three directions: the

Bombay army from the sea, the Marathas from the north, and the Madras army from the east. Not all the Maratha chiefs were sanguine about British aims, but the hawks in Poona prevailed. In July of the same year, the Nizam entered into a similar treaty with the Company. His goal was to recover territories he had lost to Mysore in previous wars. To complete the encirclement of Tippu, the British incited the Nayars of Malabar, the Bibi of Cannanore and the Raja of Cochin. Tippu initiated a diplomatic counter offensive of his own to convince the Marathas and the Nizam to support him or remain neutral. In this game of diplomacy, the British carried the day, and a four-pronged attack against Mysore began in 1791.



The British fielded more than 25,000 troops, including 600 British officers. The Nizam provided 20,000 troops, while the Maratha armies numbered about the same. A supply chain of over 42,000 bullocks and several hundred elephants backed these armies. Cornwallis moved to Madras from Calcutta and personally took command of the operations. The initial military advantage lay with Tippu Sultan. The sustained onslaught from the three enemies took its toll, however, and the Mysoreans reluctantly yielded territory.

The war lasted a full two years. The Fort of Bangalore fell in 1792 after a desperate resistance. Throughout the war, Tippu Sultan tried to make a separate peace with the Marathas and the Nizam. To the Marathas he

offered gifts. To the Nizam he appealed in the name of God and the Prophet. But the Marathas were embroiled in their own internal politics. Although they were lukewarm in attacking Mysore, they could not extricate themselves from the alliance. Some Maratha chiefs, like Sindhia, considered a prolonged Anglo-Mysore conflict as a means to furthering their own ambitions to conquer Rajasthan and the Punjab. As for the Nizam, nothing mattered except his own immediate self-interest. The overtures did not succeed. Similar overtures to the French bore no fruit either because the French had their hands full with their Revolution (1789). They offered plenty of advice but no military help.

From Bangalore, the confederate armies proceeded south, and overcoming stiff resistance from the defenders, lay siege to Srirangapatam. With his military options exhausted, Tippu sought terms of peace. The British, too, were exhausted and their treasury in India was empty. Besides, British troops were needed at home to meet the growing challenge from revolutionary France. The parties signed the Treaty of Srirangapatam in 1793, by which Tippu Sultan was forced to give up half his kingdom and agreed to pay 30 million rupees to the confederates. Until the amount was paid, he was obliged to give two of his children, Abdul Khaliq and Moezzuddin, as hostages to the British. The taking of children as hostages in war was an act of banditry, not of chivalry, and it was not known in India. But then, the East India Company was there to make money, and not necessarily to practice a soldier's code of ethics!

The Third War of Mysore contained the military power of Mysore. The British won this war through their superior intelligence apparatus and diplomacy. They were more successful than the Mysoreans in exploiting the internal politics of the Indian courts to their advantage. Cornwallis also proved to be a match for the Sultan in sheer tenacity, and refused to give up even when his army was almost crippled by disease, pestilence and the monsoons. After the war, Tippu reorganized his kingdom, introduced administrative and military reforms, paid back the hostage money within a year, and by 1795 the kingdom was well on its way to recovery.

But the British feared even a Tippu Sultan reduced in strength. Cornwallis tried to renew the confederacy of 1791 with the Nizam and the Marathas, but was unsuccessful because these two Indian states were at each other's throats, fighting a bloody war over territory in Kardla (1795) in

which the Marathas were victorious and the Nizam was thoroughly humiliated.

The eruption of the French Revolution provided a fresh opportunity for Tippu Sultan and set the stage for a final showdown with the British. The American Revolution had provided a model for the overthrow of the monarchies in Europe. The powerful writings of French philosophers like Voltaire had paved the way for a changed intellectual paradigm. In July 1789, a French peasant mob stormed the Bastille, freeing the political prisoners. Their leaders declared the sanctity of the political rights of man and demanded the abolishment of oppressive feudalism. In October of the same year, a Paris mob took over the royal palace, and forced Louis XVI to adopt their revolutionary manifesto. Special privileges of the feudal lords were abolished, universal male suffrage introduced, representative government established, public education encouraged, and promotion by talent and merit instituted in place of influence and birth. The Revolution turned bloody when it sought to regulate the Church. In the ensuing turmoil, Louis XVI and the French nobility went to the guillotine. What had started as a revolution based on Voltaire's rational thought had turned into a bloody dictatorship by 1792. As the Revolution spread across Europe, France was militarized with a million Frenchmen under arms. England declared war on France (1793), and a dashing artillery captain name Napoleon Bonaparte rose to become the commander of the revolutionary forces and, ultimately, the head of the French state.

Tippu Sultan was aware of these revolutionary changes sweeping Europe. The cry of "liberty, equality, fraternity" was in consonance with his own existential vision for India. Among all the rulers of 18th century India, only Tippu could see the possibility of a free India, without the domination of Europe. And towards this possibility, he directed his energies, and in the final stage, gave his life for it. On a different plane, he saw the threat to Islamic civilization from European domination and sought to alert the Turks in Istanbul, the Arabs in Oman and the Afghans in Kabul to this danger. It was this vision, backed by a single-minded determination to achieve it, more than the inherent capability of a small state like Mysore that made the British fear him.

The French Revolution considered it a global mission to liberate the world from the oppression of despots. The monarchies of Western Europe

fell one after the other, even as the consolidation of the revolution turned it into a dictatorship. In 1798, after overrunning all of Western Europe (except England), Napoleon landed in Egypt, and easily defeated the Turkish garrisons there. His global plan was to march from Egypt to Syria and from there to Iraq, sail from Basra to the west coast of India and evict the British from the Indian Ocean. Aware of these galactic changes, Tippu Sultan sent an ambassador to Napoleon in 1798, with a proposal for a joint attack on the British in India. The grand plan was for Napoleon to land on the Malabar coast, and after evicting the British from Madras, advance upon Bombay, and proceed from there to Bengal. Thus Tippu's vision embraced not just Mysore, but the entire Indian subcontinent, and the Islamic world beyond.

Tippu also sent a similar proposal to the Ottomans in Istanbul and to Zaman Shah in Kabul. The Turkish sultan, himself under pressure from Napoleon's armies, rejected Tippu's request, and instead advised him to cooperate with the British against the French. Zaman Shah responded positively and moved with a large force from Kabul taking Lahore in 1798 on his way to Delhi. But British diplomacy fanned Shi'a-Sunni disturbances between Persia and Afghanistan, Persian forces moved towards Qandahar and Zaman Shah had to withdraw from Hindustan to tend to matters at home.

Napoleon, impressed with the reputation and determination of Tippu Sultan, wrote to him in 1799:

“From Bonaparte, Member of the National Convention, Commanding General, to the Most Magnificent Sultan, our greatest friend, Tippu Saheb: You have already been informed of my arrival on the Red Sea, with a large and invincible Army, full of a desire to deliver you from the yoke of England... . I request you to inform me by way of Muscat and Mocha as to your political situation ... . I would further wish you could send some intelligent person to Suez or Cairo, someone in your confidence, with whom I may confer ... . May the Almighty increase your power and destroy your enemies”.

The letter was to be delivered to Tippu through the Sheriff of Mecca, but was intercepted by agents of the British in Aden and never reached Mysore. Meanwhile, Napoleon was defeated by Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar (1799), and the Ottomans stopped the French in Syria. Napoleon withdrew

to France. Mysore became a casualty of the Napoleonic Wars. Convinced that Tippu would never give up his dream to rid India of the British, they resolved to eliminate him. The aggressive new Governor General Wellesley needed no fresh provocation to renew hostilities. A new alliance was struck with the Nizam, who was always ready to grab at any straw thrown at him by the British. But the Marathas, alarmed at the growing power of the Company, refused to join this time. More importantly, the Company's agents "bought off" most of the senior officers of Tippu Sultan. The finance minister Mir Saadiq was a principal turncoat. Others who were under varying degrees of British influence were the divan Poornayya and the army commanders Qamruddin and Sayyid.

The Third Mysore War had greatly reduced the boundaries of Mysore and provided more convenient jumping off points for an invasion. Treason at the highest level denied the Sultan accurate information about enemy troops. In March 1799, a force of 20,000 Company troops, and an equal number from the Nizam, backed by a host of support and supply troops invaded the land of Tippu Sultan and quickly overran the Fort of Bangalore. Resistance from the Mysore infantry was stiff, but by April 4, 1799, the invaders reached the capital of Srirangapatam and laid siege to it.

It was a hot summer day on May 4, 1799, a day of infamy in the history of India and of shame in the history of the Muslims. The sun beat down mercilessly on the Deccan Plateau. Heat waves rose from the baked soil, creating ghost like mirages in the air. There was an eerie silence in the Fort of Srirangapatam, the capital of Mysore. The birds had retired into their nests to escape the heat. Even the beasts in the surrounding forests had withdrawn from the mayhem of war. Tippu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore, had just returned from inspecting his troops, and was sitting down to his midday meal with his infant son.

Suddenly, there was an uproar from the western side of the fort. Volleys of gunfire could be heard, mingled with shouts of a thousand men in mortal combat. A soldier rushed to the Sultan, offered a military salute, and informed him that the British forces had breached the western wall and had invaded the island capital. The Sultan rose up, put on his kamarband and regal turban, mounted his Arabian horse, and rode into battle with his bodyguard. Dust rose from the hooves of the horses as the soldiers disappeared into the far distance and joined the battle lines.

The Sultan mounted a rampart and surveyed the field. The waters of the Cauvery River, which flowed around Srirangapatam, creating a natural moat around the fort, were low from the summer heat. To the west were 6,000 British soldiers of the Madras Army under General Harris supported by an equal number of hired Indian Sepoys. To the north were an additional 2,000 British soldiers under General Stuart from the Bombay Army and hundreds of Indian support troops. Farther out were more than 20,000 troops from the Nizam of Hyderabad, who had joined the British, despite the call of patriotism and faith. Supporting these large armies were more than 40,000 bullocks, which served as beasts of burden, hauling supply carts for the invaders.

Harris had advanced upon Srirangapatam on April 4. The march was the opening act of an historical drama, which was to change the history of India and of the British Empire. Wellesley, Governor General of the British East India Company, had instructed Harris to accept nothing less than surrender from Tippu. On April 20, Harris submitted these terms to the Sultan:

- 1) Surrender to the East India Company the entire Malabar Coast in western India.
- 2) Surrender more than half of Mysore territories to the British.
- 3) Pay 20 million rupees as war indemnity. (In 1799 a Mysore rupee had the purchasing power of more than 3,000 Indian rupees today).
- 4) Expel all Frenchmen from the kingdom (The French had arrived to help Mysore against the British).
- 5) Surrender four of Tippu's sons as ransom until the indemnity was paid.
- 6) Accept a British Resident in Srirangapatam. (The last stipulation, if accepted, would have made Tippu Sultan a satrap of the British Crown).

These humiliating terms were totally unacceptable to the Sultan who is often quoted as saying, "To live like a tiger for one day is preferable to living a hundred years as a jackal". The terms were rejected and Tippu decided to defend the liberty of his people to his last breath.



A noble vision requires noble men to achieve it. This was not to be. The ethical rot that had consumed Bengal in 1757 was now gnawing at Mysore. Muslim civilization was in an advanced stage of decay. It now produced traitors and sycophants in abundance, and very few mujahids and ghazis. Neither was the rot confined to the Muslims. Indian society, always at the brink of fragmentation, had lost the cohesion to resist a foreign invader. Traitors, Muslims and Hindus alike, men who had sold themselves to the enemy for a petty jagir (land grant) or a paltry pension, surrounded Tippu. Critical information was withheld from the Sultan. The three principal Mysore commanders operating to the rear of the British forces, Qamruddin, Poornayya, and Sayyid, were all in collusion with the British. On April 6, Major General Floyd, second in command to General Harris of the Madras Army, had marched from the east, along the Cauvery River, to link up with the Bombay Army under General Stuart advancing from the west. Qamruddin, in command of the Mysore Cavalry, had galloped on Floyd's flank the entire distance but did nothing to impede the enemy. A second Mysore Army Corps under Poornayya was silent during the entire conflict. A third Corps under Sayyid was in open league with the British. Indeed, except for General Ghaffar, who commanded the southern ramparts within the Fort, all of the leading figures on the Mysore side were working with the British.

The principal figure in this infamous group was Mir Saadiq, finance minister at the Tippu court. As early as October 1798, he had written to the British agents in Madras that he was willing to place himself under their protection. During the fateful siege of 1799, he played a crucial role in the fall of Srirangapatam. By May 3, heavy and sustained bombardment from British guns had opened a breach in the western wall of the fort. That night, under pretext of inspecting the damaged fort, Mir Saadiq spent his time at the western ramparts. Curiously, at the same time, an English scout under Lt. Lalor, forded the Cauvery River and examined the same ramparts. Historians of the Mysore conflict have inferred that the two met at this breach and agreed that the British should assault the Fort on the afternoon of May 4th.

At 1 pm on May 4th, Mir Saadiq, the finance minister, directed Mir Nadim, the Qiladar (captain of the fort), to arrange for salary payments to the troops defending the fort. The troops were withdrawn from the western

sector. At 1:30 pm, Mir Saadiq ascended the ramparts near the breach and waved a white handkerchief, signaling the British that a general assault could begin. Mysore historians are unanimous that Mir Saadiq was a traitor to his sultan and played a crucial, perhaps a decisive, role in the fall of Srirangapatam.

The Sultan threw himself into the thick of battle, calling on the Mysore defenders to hold their ground. The Mysore flag with the blazing sun at its center, and tiger stripes radiating out, shone with added pride that summer afternoon. The British had already broken through the lightly defended outer ramparts, from where Mysore troops had been withdrawn at the instigation of Mir Saadiq. From there, in an enveloping movement, the British had advanced along the northern and southern rims of the fort. The appearance of the Sultan held the lines along the northern rim. In the fray, the Sultan himself received three bayonet wounds. But the enemy threw additional troops into the battle. Altogether, 4,376 British and several thousand Indian troops were involved in the assault. The southern battlements, commanded by Sayyid who was in league with the British, offered little resistance, and the southern assault succeeded in breaking through to the palace, located towards the center of the island. The Sultan was now hemmed in. Undaunted, he led his stead forward. Loyal troops charged, cutting down the invading forces. An enemy bullet pierced the Sultan's stomach. He fought on, like a wounded tiger, surrounded by mortal enemies. Another round hit his shoulder, and the force of the round knocked him off his horse, and his turban fell. The wounded prince stood his ground on foot, his sword glistening in the afternoon sun, surrounded on all sides by red coats. The afternoon wore on, even as the lonely Sultan held off one charge after another. It is said among the Muslims of Mysore that the angels themselves stopped to marvel at this prince of valor. At last, the brave soldier fell, exhausted by thirst, enfeebled by blood loss from his wounds.

The sun was now about to set not just on the Fort of Srirangapatam but on India itself. As the Sultan lay semi-conscious, a British soldier reached for Tippu's diamond-studded kamarband, hoping to claim it as his war booty. But the Tiger was only wounded; he was not dead. Out came the Sultan's sword and in one swoop he inflicted a gashing wound on the intruder's arm. Enraged, the soldier shot the Sultan in the temple and his

soul departed to join up with those who had inherited the legacy of Hussain, grandson of the Prophet and the martyr of Karbala.

An epoch ended in the history of the Islamic people, and a new epoch began. The sun set on the age of soldier-kings. With him disappeared “the pride of India and the shield of the Caliphate”. Alone among the princes of India, Tippu had valiantly defended his independence against the encroachments of Europe. From a global Muslim perspective, he was the only soldier-king in modern times, who stood his ground and lay down his life defending his realm against an aggressive and expansionist Europe. The age of merchants was about to dawn, in which the trader-barons of England would be the kingmakers of Asia.

It was dark when a search party of the victorious British found the body of the Sultan. When General Harris heard of the death of Tippu, he is said to have exclaimed: “Today, India is ours!” When news spread that the Sultan had fallen, a loot of Srirangapatam began. The British fell upon the defenseless inhabitants of the capital. Throughout the night of May 5th, they indulged in an orgy of slaughter, looting and fire, which continued well into the following day. Every single house in the island city was plundered. Turbans, daggers, jewelry, furniture, anything of value—and sometimes of no value—was taken. The Sultan’s palace was ransacked, and everything in it was looted, down to the linen on Tippu’s bed. The throne of Mysore was broken up and melted down for its gold. The famous huma bird, studded with diamonds and rubies that had adorned the throne was claimed by one of the colonels. The total amount of loot that day exceeded 2 million English pounds, which was more than twice what was extracted by the British from the Begums of Oudh in 1764. This amount would be equal to 2 billion US dollars at today’s market prices. Untold amounts of jewels were stolen. The booty was divided up among the troops, with the British officers often shamelessly disagreeing among themselves about their portion of the loot. As time went on, the remnants of the Sultan’s treasures were dispersed. There is hardly an old army barrack in the British Isles today that does not boast a piece of booty from Tippu’s capital. Items that were unusual, or priceless (such as the diamond and ruby studded huma bird), made their way to the royal museums.

The Nizam, left out of the spoils of war, asked for his portion. The British denied the request saying that it was their soldiers who had conducted the

final assault. On second thought, General Harris noticed that the tigers in Tippu's zoo had not been fed for three days because of the pressures of war. They were restless and hungry. Harris offered the hungry tigers to the Nizam's general, an offer that was politely declined.

It was not until the afternoon of the fifth of May 1799 that the looting stopped. The British Code of Arms called for a proper burial for a noble foe. The Sultan's body was mounted on a carriage, drawn by sixteen horses, and was carried to the Gumbaz, where his father lay buried. Leading the procession were British troops from the same regiments that had stormed the Fort. Prayers were said, and British guns saluted the vanquished foe, as Tippu's body was laid to rest. Alone among the many princes, padashas, nawabs, rajas and potentates that the British vanquished in their relentless expansion around the globe, Tippu Sultan had won their respect as a worthy foe. To this day, British historians refer to this prince of soldiers as "Tippu Saib", honoring a Sultan who held the British Empire at bay for forty years.

Those who had betrayed the Sultan received their due reward from the Company. Qamruddin and Poornayya hurried back to the capital upon hearing the news of Tippu's death. Qamruddin was given a jagir, and no doubt had plenty of time to ruminate on the aftermath of his betrayal. Poornayya became the divan (prime minister) for the infant Raja who was installed on the throne of Mysore by the British. Sayyid fell on the day of the battle in the mayhem of war. As for Mir Saadiq, he was dragged down from his horse as he rode away after tipping off the British and was slain by a Mysore soldier. For generations, the Muslims of Mysore have invoked the curse of God upon his grave.

Tippu had, with singular determination, resisted the advance of the British. His death, and the fall of Srirangapatam removed the last hurdle from British ambitions to control the vast subcontinent of India and Pakistan. With Tippu's last breath, Muslim power in the subcontinent also breathed its last. The kingdom of Mysore was divided up. The rich spice-trading coastline of Malabar was absorbed into the Bombay dominions. The Nizam received the districts of Cuddapah and Kurnool. A truncated and landlocked Mysore was left for the Rajas, and a British Resident installed to oversee the affairs of the princely state. Tippu's sons were expelled to Calcutta, where they received a pension for a while, but gradually melted into the poverty stricken milieu of Bengal. The only remaining armed

power on Indian soil, the Marathas, could not withstand British pressure for long, and succumbed four year later in 1803. By 1806, the British Army was in Red Fort in Delhi. With the vast resources of the subcontinent at their command, the British embarked on building their empire, on which it was said at one time, the sun never set.

## **Shah Waliullah of Delhi**

A great civilization must have the resilience to renew itself from within. It is what distinguishes a civilization from a mere dynasty. Islamic civilization has demonstrated time and again its innate capacity for renewal after every disaster. The death of Prophet Mohammed was the first great trial of the Islamic community. That challenge was successfully met, although the price for that success was the civil wars (656-670) that hardened Shi'a-Sunni differences. The second major challenge was that of ideas from Greece and India. The Islamic world internalized these ideas, developed them, and after a period of tumult brought on by Mu'tazilite ideas (8th and 9th centuries) remolded them within its own ethos. The result was the emergence of Asharite doctrines and a more spiritual Islam, embodied in tasawwuf that dominated Islamic thinking for a thousand years. The challenge of Greek and Indian ideas ended with the eloquent defense of Al Ghazzali (1111). The third test came with the Mongol devastation of the 13th century (1219-1301). Islam overcame that challenge through its inner resilience embodied in tasawwuf. The conquerors were themselves converted and became the standard bearers of Islamic faith. The fourth challenge came from Europe (1600-1900). It was a total challenge embracing political, economic, cultural and ideational spheres. As western civilization became global (1945 onwards), that challenge also became global, and its reach included not just the Islamic civilization but also other non-European civilizations of China, India, Japan and Africa. It continues to this day, although its thrust has shifted from religion to economics.

Reform, as a collective effort to return to the purity of faith, is a recurrent theme in Islamic history. Since the decisive moment when the Prophet passed away, Muslims have struggled to shape their destiny in the mold of the Sunnah (example) of the Prophet. This perpetual struggle has produced some of the most influential personages in the history of the Muslim peoples.

After the Battle of Plassey (1757), the tide of global affairs had turned decidedly in favor of Europe. Although it would take more than a hundred

years to supplant and colonize much of Asia and Africa, the relative weakness of the Muslim world was obvious to perceptive minds. Some scholars felt that this weakness was the result of deviation from the path of the Prophet. First there was Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1763) who followed in the long lineage of scholars in the subcontinent and had a decisive impact on the political military events in South Asia. Then came Shaykh Abdul Wahhab of Najd (circa 1760). His reformist thrust was terse, shorn of the embellishments that had accrued to religion in the Ottoman Empire. The third influential personage was Shaykh Uthman Dan Fuduye of Nigeria. Shaykh Dan Fuduye belonged to the Qadariya movement and his approach, in contrast to that of Shaykh Abdul Wahhab, was decidedly sufic and activist.

Although they lived in the second half of the 18 th century, these three reformers faced different challenges. Shah Waliullah lived at a time when rampant corruption had destroyed the Moghul Empire. He attempted to restore the glory of Muslim civilization in India. Shaykh Abdul Wahhab desired to bring back the simplicity of religion that existed in early Islam. Both Shah Waliullah and Shaykh Wahhab were dealing with local situations wherein Islamic civilization was past its zenith, and decay had set in. In contrast Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye faced a society wherein Islam was spreading among the masses and the purity of faith was compromised by the retention of old animist practices of the people. The first two, Shah Waliullah and Shaykh Wahhab, waged a rear-guard action to arrest the decline of old societies. The last one, Shehu Uthman was in the forefront of a revolution to create a new one.

Among the thinkers who have influenced the course of Islamic history in the India-Pakistan subcontinent, the names of Shaykh Ahmed

Sirhindi, Shah Waliullah of Delhi, and Muhammed Iqbal of Lahore stand out. History is propelled by ideas. These three were the giants who provided the ideas for men of action like the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb, Shaykh Syed Ahmed Shahid of Punjab, and Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the architect of Pakistan. The triumphs and tribulations, the achievements and failures, the hopes and disappointments, the joy and the sorrow, of the great Islamic community in the subcontinent, which today stands at well over 400 million, can be traced back to the work of these stalwarts. Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi was the intellectual force behind the triumph of the orthodox wing

of Indian Islam under Aurangzeb over the sufic Islam championed by Dara Shikoh. In choosing orthodoxy over the reforms instituted by Emperor Akbar (d. 1604), Muslims in the subcontinent selected an historical course, which would make accommodation with the largely non-Muslim Indian milieu more difficult. The political initiatives of Shah Waliullah resulted in the third Battle of Panipat (1761). It contained Maratha influence to areas east of Lahore, created a political vacuum in central Punjab, and contributed to Sikh ascendancy under Ranjit Singh. Lastly, the concept of Pakistan was first proposed by Muhammed Iqbal (1931). It was later adopted by the All India Muslim League (1940) and carried to fruition by Muhammed Ali Jinnah.

Born into a family of scholars in 1703, four years before the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, Shah Waliullah received his early education from his father. At the age of sixteen, he became an instructor in the madrasah run by his family. In 1731, at the age of twenty-eight, he embarked on the Hajj, and stayed in Arabia for more than a year to learn from well-known scholars in Mecca and Madina. Returning to Delhi in 1732, he delegated the teaching tasks to his assistants, and concentrated instead on social reform and religious reconstruction.

Rare among Islamic scholars, Shah Waliullah combined in himself a mastery of kalam and tasawwuf, the two streams of thought that have been the primary modulators of Islamic history over the last thousand years. In his encyclopedic knowledge and the breath of his vision he was without peers. Aware that sectarian differences in Fiqh and madhab were tearing the community apart, he attempted a synthesis of Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of jurisprudence based on the central themes of adl (justice) and ihsan (good deeds towards fellow humans). In this respect alone, he stands tall among a handful of great scholars who mastered different schools of Fiqh and sought to synthesize them. It was Shah Waliullah's successors who laid the foundation of the Fiqh that is practiced in India and Pakistan today. The Shah was aware that independent thought was muzzled among learned men, that the spirit of ijtiḥad was asleep, and Muslims had long accepted taqlid (to follow, to emulate, to copy) as the governing principle of religious life. In his incisive analysis of Islamic history, he traced the origin and development of taqlid. He held that ijtiḥad was essential if Muslims were to confront the acute problems of the age. (ijtiḥad is a rigorous and



independent application of the Shariah by a competent scholar who analyzes and offers solutions to the paramount issues of the age). With this conviction, he set out to transform the entire spectrum of Muslim life, including its religious, social, political, and military aspects. His major works include *Mussafa*, *Izalah*, *Hujjah*, *Buddor e Bazigah*, *Tafheemat e Ilahiyah*, *Musawwa* and *Musaffa*. In his writings, he attacked theological rigidity along sectarian lines, excessive argumentation and disagreements among scholars, social diseases such as drinking, prostitution and gambling, corrupt social customs such as lavish marriages, extravagant banquets and prevention of widow marriages, excessive attachment to esoteric doctrines and shifting the focus of worship from God to grave worship, corruption of the ruling circles including excessive taxation, armed oppression of peasants, drinking and debauchery. To combat the rampant corruption prevalent in the land, Shah Waliullah presented a vision of Islam as a complete way of life based on the Qur'anic injunction to enjoin what is good, forbid what is evil, and believing in God. He sought to infuse in the society rectitude based on the example of the Prophet and the early Companions. It is for the breadth of his scholarly reach, his incisive analysis of the evils of the age, and his attempts at a reconstruction of Islamic life in the subcontinent, that the Shah earned the title of Mujaddid.

Shah Waliullah was the first in the subcontinent to translate the Qur'an into the Persian language that was widely spoken among the learned circles in India at that time. It was his initiative, and his example, that later inspired translations of the Qur'an into Urdu and other Indian languages. His sons were the first to translate the Qur'an into Urdu. He trained a large number of scholars and teachers whose influence in northern India and Pakistan was felt throughout the 19th century. His son Shah Abdul Aziz was a principal figure in the religious life of Delhi in the waning years of the Moghul Empire. His grandson Shah Ismail Shahid fought for a just political order in the Punjab. His followers Sayyid Ahmed and Shah Ismail founded an Islamic movement in northwest India in the first half of the 19th century. In modern times, his influence inspired the voluminous works of Maulana Maudoodi of India and Pakistan, and the Jamaat e Islami movement.

It was in the political military sphere that Shah Waliullah's presence was immediately felt. Comparing kingship to pre-Islamic governments, the Shah called for the re-establishment of the Caliphate after the example of Khulfa

e Rashidoon. He was a prime mover in the political military events of the age.

The India of Shah Waliullah was in an advanced stage of social and political disintegration. There was chaos in the court of Delhi. After Nadir Shah ransacked Delhi (1739) and withdrew, the Moghul Emperor Mohammed Shah tried to hold the empire together. Muhammed Shah died in 1748, and his son Ahmed Shah (1748-1754) became the Emperor. Ahmed Shah appointed Safdar Jung as his grand vizier, but Safdar was more interested in settling scores with his personal enemies than in the administration of the state. The Emperor then favored Ghaziuddin, a grandson of Nizam ul Mulk, the Subedar of Deccan. Safdar Jung rebelled. Ghaziuddin forged an alliance with the Marathas in Poona, and marched north to Delhi with a contingent of 20,000 Maratha cavalry. Safdar Jung was defeated, but now real power in Delhi had passed on to the Marathas. When Ahmed Shah died in 1754, Alamgir II ascended the throne. He was a mere puppet in the hands of the Marathas who continued their relentless advance in the Punjab. With central Punjab under their control, the Marathas became the dominant power in the subcontinent, except for the territories controlled by the British and the armed state of Mysore under Hyder Ali and his son Tippu. Ghaziuddin himself killed Alamgir II in 1759, and the disintegration of the Empire accelerated.

It is against this background of chaos that one has to look at the life and work of Shah Waliullah of Delhi. In 1758, the Maratha armies occupied Lahore and evicted Timur, son of Ahmed Shah Abdali of Kabul. The Punjab is where the vast Islamic world meets up with the subcontinental Hindu culture. At this juncture, Shah Waliullah of Delhi wrote to Ahmed Shah Abdali, inviting him to enter Punjab and stop the Marathas. Three years later, in 1761, Ahmed Shah crossed the Indus and took Lahore. A large Maratha army advanced from Delhi and met him on the plains of Panipat. The decisive battle, commonly known as the Third Battle of Panipat, was fought on June 14, 1761. In the desperate clash of arms, over 150,000 Indian soldiers perished, and the Afghans were victorious.

This event has elicited controversy among Indian historians as to the “foreign” orientation of Shah Waliullah. The controversy has been accentuated by the current India-Pakistan dialectic. Those who support the Pakistani position praise the Shah for stopping the Marathas east of Lahore.

In India, on the other hand, the Shah is taken to task for inviting a “foreign invader” to Indian soil. Some have gone so far as to portray the Third Battle of Panipat as a Hindu-Muslim clash. None of these positions is supported by historical facts. First, in the context of the times, Lahore and Kabul were not “foreign territories”. They were part of Moghul territories that had been taken by Nadir Shah as late as 1738. The factions headed by the Afghans, Pathans, Moghuls, Rajputs and Marathas were all “internal” to Hindustan. Secondly, it is incorrect to portray the Maratha armies as “Hindu”. Of the five Maratha army corps that fought at Panipat, one was led by a Muslim general who spearheaded the very first charge, and was a casualty of the war. Thousands of Muslims fought on the Indian side believing that the Marathas were safe-keepers of the Moghul throne. It would be more correct to portray the Maratha armies as “Indian”. Conversely, Ahmed Shah Abdali was interested primarily in taking revenge for the eviction of his son from Lahore, and not in the affairs of Hindustan. This is confirmed by the fact that he retired to Kabul after the Battle of Panipat and did not advance towards Delhi. Given the contest for Lahore, a test of arms between the Afghans and the Marathas was inevitable, and would have taken place with or without the correspondence of Shah Waliullah. Maratha influence in the Delhi-Agra areas did not decrease as a result of the Afghan invasion. In 1785, the Moghul Emperor Shah Alam invited Sindhia of Gwalior to become the divan and reorganize the empire. Maratha power in the Delhi-Agra area decreased and disappeared not because of the Third Battle of Panipat, but because the Marathas were defeated by the Rajputs in 1787. Lastly, in historical hindsight, the Maratha-Afghan contest comes across only as a footnote to the broad and sustained advance of the British upon the subcontinent, which was taking place about the same time.

Shah Waliullah passed away in 1763, leaving behind a scholarly legacy that has seldom been surpassed. If there is any critique of his work, it has to be that he overlooked the British challenge to Islamic civilization. Even as the Shah was involved in the internal disputes between the Afghans and the Marathas, the shadow of European domination was extending inland from the Indian Ocean. The Battle of Plassey (1757) gave the East India Company control of all the territories from Allahabad to Calcutta. Shah Waliullah must have been aware of the oppressive policies of the Company, and of the economic collapse of Bengal and Bihar under British jurisdiction. Yet, one does not find awareness in his writings about the rising

challenge of the West to a static and disintegrating India. Indeed, the great Islamic reformers of the 18th century had their vision directed inward, and were focused more on internal reform than external threat. The task of placing Islam in the context of a world-domineering Western civilization was left to scholars of a later age. Shah Waliullah offered no fresh guidance as to how to live with people of other faiths except to reiterate the practices of an earlier age based on a compartmentalized division between “Dar ul Islam” and “Dar ul Harab”.

## **Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab of Najd**

Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab was one of those rare scholars whose ideas have continued to influence the Muslims for more than 200 years. Representing the puritanical stream in Islam, in the tradition of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal (d. 855) and Shaykh Ibn Taimiyah (d. 1328), his followers continue to infuse a certain tension among Muslims, pulling them in the direction of a spartan faith, shorn of embellishments. Like the ideas of al Ashari (d. 935) in the 10th century, Wahhabi ideas have been amalgamated into modern Islamic thinking so much so that most living Muslims have consciously or unconsciously absorbed them as part of their heritage. Even those who do not agree with the positions taken by the Shaykh are forced into a continuing dialogue with his ideas. Modern Islam would not be the same without this scholar.

Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab was a contemporary of Shah Waliullah (d. 1763) of Delhi and Shehu Uthman dan Fuduye (d. 1817) of West Africa. He was born in the year 1703 into the Banu Sinan tribe of Najd in Uiyah, located approximately 50 miles from Riyadh, capital of modern Saudi Arabia. He received his early education from his father Shaykh Abdul Wahhab bin Sulaiman, which included memorization of the Qur'an and a study of Sunnah and Fiqh. As a teenager, he performed the Hajj and stayed on in Mecca and Madina to study under reputed scholars of the age, Shaykh Abdulla bin Ibrahim of Najd and Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab Hayat of India. He studied the works of classical scholars and was influenced in particular by the writings of Ibn Taimiyah. After completing his studies, he traveled through Persia and Iraq, visiting Basra and Kufa. Returning home he started teaching his austere vision of Islam. The hinterland of Arabia, inhabited mostly by Bedouins, had very little contact with the outside world. The Bedouins who roamed the vast desert practiced a folk Islam embellished with the talisman, tomb visitation and astrology. Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab found the atmosphere hostile to his teachings and had to flee his hometown.

Wandering from town to town in Najd, Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab found refuge in Uyainah whose Emir, Uthman bin Hamd, was receptive to his ideas. The Shaykh made many followers in Uyainah, but his growing popularity attracted the suspicion of neighboring emirs. Pressure was brought upon Emir Uthman to assassinate the Shaykh whose spartan vision of Islam was rapidly gaining converts in all areas of Najd. Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab escaped with his life and found refuge in Dariyah where his teachings found a responsive chord in Emir Muhammed bin Saud. There developed a remarkable friendship between Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab and Emir Muhammed bin Saud that was to have a profound impact on history. The Emir became a student and patron of the shaykh and the friendship was cemented with the marriage of a daughter of the Emir to the young shaykh.

The shaykh considered all practices which were not in strict conformance with a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to be bida'a (innovation), and he considered it his duty to eradicate such practices with force, if necessary. The religious charisma of the learned shaykh and the military-political acumen of the Emir were a powerful combination. A jihad was declared against the neighboring emirs who would not subscribe to the strict interpretations of religion offered by the Shaykh. Thus started the Wahhabi movement, which in time was to propel itself to Mecca and Madina, and spread from there over the Islamic world. In the process it thrust Saudi Arabia into modern history.

Consolidation of Wahhabi influence in the Najd continued throughout the 18 th century. Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab wrote to renowned scholars of the day outlining his vision of Islam cleansed of the accretions that had crept in over the centuries. It was after the Shaykh passed away in 1787, however, that major opportunities for expansion beyond the borders of Najd presented themselves. In 1799, Napoleon landed his troops in Ottoman Egypt, quickly overran the Nile Delta and advanced into Syria. The British defeated the French armies but the incursion of a European power into the heartland of the Ottoman Empire required a partial withdrawal of garrisons in the outlying provinces for the defense of Anatolia proper. Specifically, Ottoman garrisons in Jeddah and Mecca in Arabia as well as in Kufa and Basra in Iraq were depleted. Sensing a military opportunity, Emir Abdul Aziz of Najd who had succeeded his father Emir Muhammed ibn Saud captured Karbala in Iraq in 1802. He followed up this victory with the

capture of Mecca in 1803, bringing a major portion of Arabia, extending from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, under Saudi control.

It was not long before the Ottomans responded. Not only was a loss of territory unacceptable to the Porte in Istanbul but also the puritanical Wahhabi vision ran counter to the sufic Islam, which had taken root in the Empire. An expedition to Arabia was organized as soon as the threat from Napoleonic France receded. Muhammed Ali Pasha (d. 1849), an able Albanian soldier who had risen through the ranks in the Ottoman armies during the Napoleonic wars, now governed Egypt. During 1812-1813, Muhammed Ali recaptured Mecca from the Saudis. Resistance to further Ottoman advances to the interior, however, was fierce. It was not until 1818 that an Egyptian-Turkish force under Ibrahim Pasha, son of Khedive Muhammed Ali Pasha, succeeded in laying siege to Dariyah, the Saudi capital. The town was bombarded with cannon transported across the desert. Dariyah fell after a bitter fight.

The principal towns in Arabia were back in Ottoman hands, but the power of ideas cannot be stopped on the battlefield. The Wahhabi movement withdrew into the interior of Hejaz. The Saudis soon regrouped and founded a new capital in Riyadh. With increasing military pressure from the European powers, the Ottomans were content to maintain the status quo, with the towns under their military control while the Saudis controlled the hinterland. However, not everyone in the House of Saud subscribed to Wahhabi ideas. In 1891, Riyadh itself was wrested by a faction, which was opposed to the teachings of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab. The uprising was brief, and in 1901, Emir Abdul Aziz al Saud recaptured Riyadh and established the modern Saudi dynasty.

Global changes soon appeared on the horizon. The First World War saw Britain, France and the United States arrayed against Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire. The Arabs under Sharif Hussain of Mecca rebelled against Ottoman authority. By 1918 both Hejaz and Iraq were in British hands. After the War, internal warfare continued between the Arab factions headed by Sharif Hussain of Mecca and Emir Abdul Aziz of Najd for the control of Hejaz. In 1923, with British support, Emir Abdul Aziz succeeded in driving out the Sharif and consolidated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Control of Mecca and Madina gave the Wahhabi movement a global platform. No longer was it a movement confined to the desert of Arabia.

The Hajj provided a mechanism for the spread of Wahhabi ideas to the far corners of the Islamic world much as it had enabled the Maliki School of jurisprudence to spread across North Africa, Spain and the Sudan a thousand years earlier. The Muslims, reeling under European colonialism and the dissolution of the Caliphate (1923), were only too eager to look to their pristine past for salvation and the puritanical Wahhabi ideas seem to provide the answers. The Wahhabi movement took root in India, Indonesia, Africa and the Middle East, often at the expense of the folk Islam that had grown out of sufi movements.

The restless Bedouins, impelled by puritanical faith, were not content with the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom. They felt it was their duty to continue a jihad on neighboring territories to spread their ideas. But the world had changed since the halcyon days when Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab had taught in Dariyah. The British were now firmly in control of Iraq and would not tolerate raids into their territories. Emir Abdul Aziz tried to settle the restless Bedouins on agricultural land, but when that failed, he felt compelled to engage them in an armed struggle. In 1929, in a pitched battle at Sibilla, the Bedouins were defeated and the Wahhabi movement came under political control.

Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab was a prolific writer. Although he is best known for his views on Tawhid as expounded in his book Kitab at Tawhid, he also wrote on the seerat, hadith, iman, salat and Islam. Some of his other works include Mukhtasar Seerat ar Rasool, Majmu al Ahadith, Usool al Iman and Fadayal al Islam.

To understand the power of Wahhabi ideas, and their appeal, it is helpful to understand their historical roots. The essence of Islam is the doctrine of Tawhid, which found its fullest expression in the person of the Prophet. Since the death of the Prophet, Tawhid is the central pole around which Islamic history revolves. Every generation of Muslims has struggled to understand its full importance and to give it a concrete expression in their own lives. History, however, is a process. In the process of implementing a transcendental idea like Tawhid in a multitude of cultures and historical epochs, compromises emerge. To counter these compromises, reform movements arise which are themselves a product of their geography and their times.



Two of the historical figures from whom Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab drew his inspiration were Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal of Baghdad and Ibn Taimiyah of Damascus. Imam ibn Hanbal (d. 855), after whom the Hanbali School of Fiqh is named, lived in Baghdad at a time when Mu'tazilite doctrines were the official dogma of the Abbasids. After gaining power in the court of Caliph al Mamun, the Mu'tazilites established a mehnah (inquisition) to punish anyone who disagreed with them (833). They were philosophers, who over-extended their rational techniques to matters of faith, and came up with the position that the Qur'an was "created" in time. Many of the ulema of the age buckled under the physical pressure brought by the Mu'tazilites. Not so Imam ibn Hanbal. He led the resistance to the Mu'tazilites, steadfastly maintaining that the Qur'an, as the Word of God, was uncreated, transcendent and beyond time and space. For this position, he was jailed for thirty years and flogged repeatedly. But his determination carried the day. The Mu'tazilites were repudiated in the reign of Caliph al Mutawakkil (847). Although Imam ibn Hanbal had studied under Imam Shafi'i, the Hanbali Fiqh takes a much stricter position with regards to acceptable sources of jurisprudence. It insists on a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadith, subjects Hadith to the strictest scrutiny and accepts qiyas and ijtihad as sources of jurisprudence only as a last resort when primal sources are silent.

The Hanbali School sought to preserve the pristine nature of Islam, as it was understood in the harsh environment of the Arabian Desert. It was from this School that 400 years later there arose the well-known reformer Ibn Taimiyah (d. 1328). He lived in an age when the Muslim world was rocked by political, military, social and literary upheavals. The Mongols had ravaged much of the Islamic world (1219-1261). The Crusades (1096-1261) had left their devastation in Palestine, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. The Christians overran Spain (1212-1248). Orthodox Islam had won its internal contest with the Fatimids with the dialectic of Al Ghazzali (d. 1111), but this victory was tenuous. Al Ghazzali's positions continued to be challenged by the philosophers who waged a valiant struggle through the great Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and by the Al Muhaddith in the Maghrib who sought to introduce a variant of Mu'tazilite ideas into their dominions. Battered by foreign invasions, Muslims had turned inwards. Sufic Islam had taken hold and Muslims turned to the spiritual dimension of their faith for survival. Sufi Schools established by Shaykh Abdel Qader Jeelani (d. 1161) of

Baghdad, Shaykh Shadhuli (d. 1258) of Cairo, Shaykh Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273) of Turkey were the focus of religious instruction. The ideas of Shaykh ibn al Arabi (d. 1240) of Damascus fired the imagination of people.

Ibn Taymiyah ascribed the military misfortunes of the Muslims to what he considered was their departure from the pristine Islam of the Prophet and his Companions. He interpreted the Qur'an literally and took issue with anyone who interpreted it symbolically. Specifically, he considered the mystical teachings of Shaykh al Arabi to be *bidaa*. He questioned the *kalam* of al Ghazzali, specifically his position regarding the supremacy of *tasawwuf* over other forms of knowledge. He considered the *zawiyas* and *qanqahs*, which were mushrooming all over the Islamic world, to be a deviation from true religion. He also took issue with the philosophers and their rational approach to matters of faith. His strong views on religion won the admiration of many and the jealousy and enmity of some. Through his students, he influenced the course of events as far away as Delhi. The court martial of the Chishti sufis at the court of Gayasuddin Tughlaq in 1325 was covered in the chapter on the sufis of India and Pakistan. At the trial, a disciple of Ibn Taimiyah testified against the sufi position on *sama'a*. The edict from the Emperor was in favor of the Chishtiya sufis. Ibn Taimiyah's teachings exerted a strong influence on Muslim thinkers of subsequent centuries, and he may be considered a spiritual forefather of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab.

The teachings of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab, and those of Ibn Taimiyah and Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, have their foundation in a specific interpretation of Tawhid. The term Tawhid is comprehensive and has been understood by Muslims in a variety of ways. In its most elementary formulation it is understood to mean the Oneness of God. The Wahhabi position is that the Oneness of God is beyond analogy, similarity or quality manifest in the created world. Carried to the extreme, this position makes the world devoid of spirituality, a position similar to that taken by secular scientists. The Wahhabis consider any practice or position that seemingly compromises the transcendence of God to be *bida'a*. Such a position would make religion an uncompromising series of imperatives, a strict set of *do's* and *don'ts*. Historically, the position of Ibn Taimiyah and ibn Abdul Wahhab represents one end of the spectrum in Islamic thought.

The other end of the spectrum is occupied by the sufis who seek the spiritual dimension of Islam. They consider creation to be a means to draw the human soul closer to God. Through constant remembrance of the Divine Name, prayer, charity, service and a conscious exercise to purge the self of all that hinders the soul from proximity to the Divine, they seek a reflection of Divine Reality in the pristine soul. In the sufi position, observance of the Shariah is the first essential step on the road to Irfan (True Knowledge). They require additional work, through dhikr, abnegation of the world, cleansing of the soul and service to humanity, before a person attains certainty of knowledge.

Ibn al Arabi, considered by many to be a Master of tasawwuf, articulated the position of the sufis in his treatise *Risalat al Ahadiya*. In common terminology it came to be known as *Wahdat al Wajud* (Unity of Being). Summarily, this position holds that through observation of the Shariah, constant remembrance of God, self-cleansing, strenuous spiritual exercises and selfless service, the individual soul is lost (*fana*) and becomes a vehicle for the Will of God. Ibn al Arabi spoke of “Union with God”. One can easily see how this position can be misunderstood. And misunderstood it was through the centuries. Many a sufi went to the gallows at the hands of the less informed and the less initiated. The best known example is Hallaj ibn Mansoor who was tortured and hanged in Baghdad in 922 for saying “*An al Haq*” (I am the Truth). To guard against error, and to clarify the sufi position on Tawhid, Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi (d. 1625), the great mujaddid from India, presented the idea of *Wahdat ash Shahada* (Unity of Witness). In this position, the human soul does not seek “union” with God but only becomes a witness to Divine Unity.

Between these two poles, representing the positions taken by the Wahhabis and the sufis, lies the vast spectrum of Islamic thought. Whether or not they are aware of it, most Muslims alive today have absorbed elements of Wahhabi and sufi thinking, along with the assumptions made by al Ashari and the positions elucidated by Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi. The debate between the Wahhabi and sufi schools of thought continues, however, often with great intensity and occasional animosity. Both sides quote from the Qur’an and the Hadith of the Prophet to support their positions.

The contribution of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab was that he reasserted the pristine and uncompromising Islam, characteristic of the desert dweller. He provided a counterbalance to the excesses of esoteric doctrines and reasserted the central importance of Tawhid. History and geography were on the side of the Shaykh. Several factors helped the Wahhabi movement in its initial growth. The location of the Najd in the harsh and empty womb of the Arabian Desert protected it from changes sweeping across the world. The good fortune of the Shaykh in forming an alliance with the Saud family and the political consolidation of Saudi Arabia in the 20th century to include the cities of Mecca and Madina were also important factors. Muslims have always looked to Mecca and Madina as a source for the purity of faith. The Wahhabi movement, centered in these two pre-eminent cities, enjoyed an acceptance among Muslims that would have been impossible if it was based elsewhere.

The failure of the Wahhabi movement, however, was its extreme rigidity and its compulsive character. Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab waged a jihad against fellow Muslims in Najd who did not agree with his views. His example, and the logic of compulsion, made the Arab Bedouins carry the Wahhabi jihad into British Iraq after the First World War, and it had to be put down by Emir Abdul Aziz. The Shaykh overlooked the important contributions made by the sufis in India, Pakistan, southeastern Europe, Central Asia, Indonesia and Africa. It was the sufis who won the contest for the soul of Asia from the Mongols and the Crusaders. They were also the decisive element in some of the most important battles of the world, such as the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578).

As the 20th century wore on, the Wahhabi movement itself had to be compromised, and its strictures modified, to suit the inexorable onslaught of an increasingly global civilization. Some teachings of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab proved to be unworkable as technology pulled the desert of Arabia into its universal fold. For instance, in his book Kitab at Tawhid, the Shaykh condemned the making of pictures. With the advent of television, however, pictures became an indispensable tool for communication, and the Shaykh's position was abandoned in Arabia as well as in other parts of the Islamic world. Similarly, the Shaykh considered it bida'a to build tombs. As a result of this stricture, all the graves in Jannat ul Baqi in Madina, where lay buried many of the Companions of the Prophet, were leveled. The tomb of the

Prophet was spared only after intense lobbying by Muslims around the world. For these and other similar acts, the Wahhabi movement has opened itself to the charge that it has deliberately destroyed Islamic history and has obliterated traditional culture. Must religion necessarily destroy history and culture to express itself in human affairs? Conversely, is not religion itself compromised when it is stripped of history and culture? More importantly, isn't a religion stripped of its spiritual content, a husk without a kernel? The Wahhabi movement offers no guidance in these matters.

The stark simplicity of the Shaykh's message, and its lasting impact on Muslims, guarantees him a place in Islamic history. Thanks to the legacy of the Shaykh, the term "Wahhabi" became a part of languages spoken by Muslims and it came to personify excessive doctrinal rigidity and puritanical leanings. The excesses of the Wahhabi movement are conspicuous precisely because of its global reach. They would not be noticeable if it was only a local or regional movement. Some of the rigid positions espoused by this movement are evident in the teachings of the Shaykh. Some were evolved by his followers, as often happens when ideas find their expression in the matrix of human affairs.

The vision of the Shaykh, like the vision of his contemporaries Shah Waliullah and Shehu Uthman dan Fuduye, was turned inwards, towards a reform of Muslim practices. In the context of their times, perhaps it could not be otherwise. None of them, however, offered comprehensive guidance on how Muslims can relate to an overbearing and expansive European (and now global) civilization. This work was left to thinkers of the 20th century.

## **Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye of West Africa**

Uthman Dan Fuduye, statesman, reformer, scholar and religious teacher, emerged out of the great reform waves rolling across the Muslim world in the latter part of the 18th century. Shehu (meaning Shaykh) Uthman was the son of Fuduye Muhammad whose forefathers were members of the Torobe clan of the Fulani people. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Fulani inhabited the vast grasslands between the Sahara and the dense tropical jungles of Africa. They tended their sheep and cattle and depended on the natural bounty of the land for their food. Among them were many scholars who provided the backbone of the religious tradition in the great Mali and Songhay empires. Rainfall was sparse, about fifteen inches a year and the search for pastures produced periodic migrations. The Fulani migrated gradually from western Africa to their modern day stronghold in northern Nigeria. Linguistically the Fulani language has its basis in Bantu with a strong overlay of Arabic. Trade links across the Sahara tied the Sudan to the Maghrib, and there was considerable mixing between the Bantu, Berber, Arab and other Islamic peoples in West Africa. In a process similar to that in the Sahel of East Africa and the Malabar Coast of India, it produced a rich amalgam of culture, language, lineage and heritage.

The Fulani traced their lineage from Uqba bin Nafi, the renowned conqueror of North Africa (d. 683). Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye was therefore a descendent of Uqba bin Nafi from his father's side. On his mother's side, he was a Sayyid, a descendant of the Prophet. His mother, Sayyadatu Hawwa was in the lineage of al Hassan, son of Fatima binte Prophet Muhammed.

The western Sudan was closer to the intellectual centers of North Africa than the hinterland, and it was here that the reform waves that rolled across West Africa were born. In the 11th century this area produced the Murabitun movement, which spread throughout the western Sudan, North Africa and Spain. The movement of the Sinhaja and other tribes across the

Sahara provided the medium for transmission of ideas. The Qadariya sufi order, originating in Baghdad, soon spread to all parts of the Islamic world. Traders who plied the Sahara introduced it into West Africa in the 14th and 15th centuries. Soon, it planted itself on African soil and provided the most effective means for the spread of Islam. Since the Fulani were so widespread, they were among the first people in West Africa to come into contact with new ideas from the north. The sufis established zawiyas, provided a structure for the propagation of faith, taught the Qur'an and Sunnah, trained teachers and dedicated workers, provided social services and acted as a defensive umbrella in times of war. Sufic Islam, which had spread in Persia, India and Indonesia in the 14th and 15th centuries, now found a home in Africa. The Fulani were among the first people to embrace this new vision of Islam. From West Africa, the sufi tareeqas were carried by the Fulani into the interior and beyond the bend in the Niger River into what is today northern Nigeria. Scholarship and their knowledge of Islam made the Fulani welcome into various kingdoms then existing in West Africa. By 1775, Fulani mallams formed the backbone of the religious establishment in the entire West African belt. The strict interpretations of the Maliki school of fiqh sometimes brought them into conflict with the local emirs who ruled using a mixture of Islamic law and animist customs to suit the local conditions.

In the latter part of the 18th century, another sufi order, the Tijaniya was founded in Morocco. From there it spread southward into areas inhabited by the Sinhaja who carried it to the Sene-Gambia regions. The Tijaniya were more assertive than the Qadariya in spreading the faith and their approach found many adherents among the youth who were impatient with the slow and deliberate approach of the Qadariya order. These two orders, the Qadariya and the Tijaniya, were the spiritual force behind the revival of Islam in the Sudan.

The political convulsions of the 16th and 17th centuries had a direct impact on the migrations of people and the evolution of culture and religion in West Africa. In 1592, Mauley Ahmed of the Sa'adid dynasty in Morocco sent his army south towards the Empire of Songhay. What had started as a border clash to control the salt mines at Taghaza and Taodeni mushroomed into a full-scale invasion. Armed with muskets and cannon, the invading forces wreaked havoc on the river cities of West Africa. The great trading

centers of Timbuktu, Gao and Jenne were occupied and considerable damage was inflicted on the cities. The Songhay Emperor, Askia Ishaq, retreated eastward to his ancestral homeland. With the retreating armies went many of the scholars from Timbuktu, Gao and Jenne. These scholars provided added momentum to the spread of Islam in the southern reaches of the Niger River, which are located today in Niger and northern Nigeria.

The social dislocations caused by the war destroyed the power of the cities and increased the importance of the villages. Along with the migration of scholars from Songhay to Hausa and Fulani areas, there was a movement of marabouts, the wandering minstrels, who proved to be the active element in the transport of Islamic ideas to the hinterland. The marabouts, equally learned in Shariah and tareeqa, established local religious centers. Conversion to Islam picked up momentum. To the southeast, beyond the bend in the Niger River, Fulani merchants were equally successful in propagating the faith. Hitherto, Islam had been primarily the religion of the rulers and of the ruling aristocracy in West Africa. Now, it became a religion of the masses. The new entrants to the faith brought with them their traditions and culture much as the people of India and Indonesia had brought theirs into the Islamic fold 300 years earlier. The confluence of ancestral African religious customs and orthodox Islamic doctrines was the matrix from which emerged the reform movements of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The disintegration of the Songhay Empire was a political bonanza for the Fulani and Hausa people who lived beyond the bend of the Niger River. The Hausa-Fulani were skillful merchants and accomplished artisans and they lived in areas where agriculture thrived. They were under constant military pressure from Songhay but had never united or organized themselves to resist the Songhays. With the threat of armed invasion receding, and Songhay under Moroccan military control, they were able to set an independent course for themselves. In 1629 one of the Fulani chiefs Ardo broke away from Moroccan dominated Songhay. Similar moves for independence by other Fulani tribes followed in the succeeding decades. In 1690 several Fulani states emerged in the Messina plains in northwest Nigeria and southern Niger. Around 1790, one of the marabouts, Shaykh Alfa Muhammed Diobo, founded the city of Say. This city which is located



today at the border between Nigeria and Niger, became the nucleus for political movement and religious revival in the Hausa-Fulani areas.

Meanwhile, the political landscape of North Africa and the Mediterranean had also been transformed. The Ottoman armies, claiming to represent the full might of Islam, had moved out of Egypt and had occupied all of North Africa except Morocco. Muslim-Christian military rivalry was intense throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The Portuguese Christians had been stopped at the Battle of al Kasr al Kabir (1578), and Turkish land armies had frustrated the ambition of Catholic Spain and the Vatican in eastern Europe and North Africa. Although Turkish power in southeastern Europe was receding after the second siege of Vienna (1683), North Africa remained a part of the Ottoman Empire throughout the 18th century and strong cultural and religious interactions developed between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Turkish Empire as well as the independent Moroccan kingdom.

The powerful currents that produced the revolution of Uthman Dan Fuduye grew out of a confluence of animist culture and orthodox religion, in an environment of political uncertainty. By the year 1800, the social landscape of West Africa was being transformed. Islam was no longer the religion only of the ruling elite. It now had roots in the soil. Thousands entered the new faith through the work of the mallams. As demonstrated in the earlier experience of India and Indonesia, the acceptance of a new faith does not necessarily result in the repudiation of old cultures. The African newcomers brought with them their former culture and their old animist practices. Political conditions in Nigeria were far from settled. There was political instability due to the intense rivalry among the Emirates of Kano, Air, Zamfara, Kebbi and Katsina.

Uthman Dan Fuduye grew up in these turbulent times. In his childhood he received training in Qur'an, Hadith and the sciences of Fiqh. He mastered classical Arabic and he was fluent in the Hausa-Fulani languages. As a young man, Shaykh Uthman was influenced by the ideas of al Moghili, the well-known Islamic thinker from North Africa. Al Moghili, following some of the Hadith of the Prophet, believed that during each century a reformer would arise from among the believers to bring back the purity of faith to the masses. In the latter part of the 18th century, conditions were ripe for reform in West Africa. Many of the newly converted people used

the Qur'an as a talisman around their neck to ward off evil rather than as a divine book of guidance. Divination by trees and stones remained commonplace. Al Moghili held that a jihad must be waged to stamp out such practices. Contrary to the Shariah, some of the local rulers imposed extortionist taxes on farmers and merchants alike. Al Moghili had stated that a ruler who is unjust must be overthrown. Some of the mallams, ill trained as they were in the classical disciplines of the Qur'an, Hadith and Fiqh, could not provide correct interpretations of the Qur'an. Al Moghili maintained that a person, who claimed to be a teacher, must know Arabic in order that he may correctly understand the Qur'an, Sunnah and Fiqh.

Shehu Uthman also studied tasawwuf and became an ardent sufi. Tasawwuf is the inner dimension of Islam and has been an integral part of the Islamic spectrum from its inception. Sufi practices aim towards cleansing the soul so that it becomes conscious of the Divine presence. The Prophet placed great importance on self-purification and taught that struggle against the self was greater than struggle against external enemies. Shehu Uthman read the works of Al Ghazzali (d.1111) and became a follower of Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad (d.1166), founder of the Qadiriya order, who is accepted in sufi circles as Shaykh ul Mashaiq (teacher of the teachers). Shaykh Uthman believed that Abdul Qader Jeelani had spoken to him in a vision, urging him to wage a struggle against the unbelief of the age.

By the year 1800, Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye had gathered around himself a large number of scholars, students and followers. He established a zawiya (circle) of the Qadiriya order in the city of Degel. This center served a religious function similar to the city of Qum in modern Persia. The ulema of Degel became increasingly vocal in their criticism of the corrupt emirs and deviant practices of the general population. But the power of new ideas seldom goes unchallenged by the establishment. The ruler of the local province, Yunfa, first attempted to assassinate Shehu Uthman and then banished him from Degel. In 1804, following the example of the Hijra of the Prophet, the Shehu migrated from Degel to Gudu, some thirty miles away. The ulema and many among the masses, joined the learned man in this march and declared him their imam, shaykh and emir ul momineen. Alarmed at the growing strength of the Shaykh, Yunfa sent an expedition against Gudu. Skirmishes followed. In the summer of 1804 Dan Fuduye's

forces won a decisive victory against Yunfa. The Shaykh promptly declared that this victory followed the Prophet's victory at the Battle of Badr. His vision now embraced all of western Africa and he declared a jihad against the Hausa kingdoms. However, in the winter of the same year, Dan Fuduye's followers suffered a defeat. Notwithstanding these reverses, Dan Fuduye captured Birnin Kebbi, capital of Kebbi in 1805. Fulani cattle herders, Hausa farmers, merchants and scholars all followed his lead to establish a just social and political order. During the next three years, Shehu Uthman's forces successively captured Alkalwa, capital of Gobir, Katsina, Daura and Bauchi. In 1808 successful campaigns were waged in the state of Borno.

Dan Fuduye was a prolific writer and a consummate orator. The central theme in his writings is the Qur'anic injunction, "You are the most noble of ummah created for mankind, enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong and believing only in God." Some of his well known works include *Fath ul Bassa* (The Unlocking of Spiritual Vision), *Tariq al Jannah* (The Road Towards Paradise), *Umdat ul Ulama* (Support of the Scholars), *Bayan Bida as Shaitaniya* (Description of Religious Innovations of Shaitan), *Umda ul Bayaan Fil Ulum Allati Wajib Alal Ayan* (Supportive Exposition of Knowledge Obligatory on Every Person), *Udmat ul Mutabideen Wal Muhtarifeen* (Supportive Exposition of the Committed and Sincere Followers) and *Umdat ul Bayan* (Supportive Expose).

Shaykh Uthman viewed religion as composed of Islam, Iman and Ihsan. Islam, according to the Shaykh, was the implementation of the Shariah (Divine Law). Iman (faith) was the essence of religious life. And Ihsan was the realization of the spiritual potential of the human soul. The Shaykh considered it an obligation on the part of all believers to obtain knowledge of these three disciplines and to implement them in their lives.

Shehu Uthman divided the science of tasawwuf into two parts: (1) *Takhallaq* or reformation of the inner self, and (2) *Tahaqquq* or knowledge of certainty. Reformation of the inner self precedes knowledge of certainty. It includes practice of the Shariah, remembrance of the Divine names and renunciation of those attributes that corrupt the soul, such as hatred, jealousy, undue anger and acquisitiveness. The Shaykh taught that Shariah and tasawwuf were both integral to the completion and fulfillment of an

Islamic life. He considered iman, Islam and ihsan to be pre-requisites to any aspiration to Tahaqquq or knowledge of certainty.

Shehu Uthman was a consummate scholar of jurisprudence. He took his rulings from Al Suyuti, the Maliki scholar of the Mamluke courts (circa 1500) whose influence radiated throughout North Africa and the Middle East in the succeeding centuries. Although the Shehu followed the Fiqh of Imam Malik bin Anas, he gave equal weight to the Fiqh of Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Hanbal.

Struggle for a just social and political order was his motto. He strove for the establishment of an Islamic state wherein the Shariah was followed, taxes were fair and men and women were treated with justice and equity. In his book, Kitab al Farq, Shehu Uthman outlines the differences between an Islamic government and an un-Islamic government. In the latter, the officials are corrupt, take bribes; the rulers are oppressive and impose extortionist taxes on a hapless population. By contrast, an Islamic government is just and fair wherein the dignity of man is honored and the honor of women is preserved. Uthman Dan Fuduye made Sokoto in northern Nigeria his capital and established the Caliphate of Sokoto. This Caliphate included most of what is today the Hausa-Fulani belt in Nigeria and extended into the neighboring state of Cameroon. Its area was approximately three times the area of the state of New York. Shehu Uthman was an able administrator. He divided up the territories into four regions. His brother Abdullahi ruled the western region. His son and successor, Muhammed Bello, ruled the eastern region. His army commander, Ali Jedo, ran the northern region. The south was administered by one of his early followers. Shehu Uthman himself governed from Sokoto as the religious leader and Shaykh.

The influence of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fuduye was not confined to immediate areas under his control. His ideas radiated out and had a profound impact on the religious struggles in all of West Africa. One of his disciples, Shaykh Ahmed Lobo waged a jihad and established a kingdom in Macina (1827) on the upper reaches of the Niger River. Alhajj Omar, inspired by the example of Shehu Uthman, waged a jihad in the Sene-Gambia region (1854-1864) that contained the advance of the French from the coast. Almami Samori established an Emirate in the Ivory Coast. To the east, the Caliphate of Kanem-Bornu was fashioned after the Caliphate in

Sokoto. In northern Cameroon, the local Fulani people established the Emirate of Adamawa. The goal in all these struggles was to establish rule by Shariah, to ensure fair taxation and justice for all and to improve the moral and material well being of the population. These revolutions increased trade, facilitated improved agricultural production and provided a great stimulus for scholarship and learning.

Great ideas as often compromised when they are implemented. The Shehu himself was less interested in politics and administration and was more focused on teaching and writing. Politics and administration were delegated to his son Muhammed Bello and his brother Abdullahi. Muhammed Bello and Abdullahi were scholars in their own right and were superb administrators. Bello took the title of Emirul Momineen and established a Caliphate in Sokoto, which lasted until the British conquests in 1903. Shehu Uthman and Muhammed Bello were only partially successful in realizing their vision of establishing a just rule “enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.” The reason was the jealousies and rivalries among his followers who felt that they deserved to be rewarded for their efforts by high government appointments. The spiritual father of Uthman Dan Fuduye’s movement, Al Moghili, was against the idea of scholars seeking official posts. Apparently the faith of Uthman Dan Fuduye’ was not shared by his immediate followers who were more interested in their personal well being than in following the teachings of the great Al Moghili. Uprisings broke out in several parts of the far-flung Caliphate. Muhammed Bello had to wage successive campaigns to suppress these uprisings. Often, he had to compromise and reward some of the disgruntled chieftains by appointing them as chiefs and emirs. The Caliphate of Sokoto did not have a large, standing army to force its political will on the empire. Disputes had therefore to be settled by compromise. This lack of a standing fighting force took its toll when the British finally arrived on the scene with their cannons in the early part of the twentieth century.

## **The Sepoy Uprising of India**

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European arms had subjugated a large portion of Asia and Africa. Pax Britannica ruled the oceans and the Indian Ocean had become a British lake. The Dutch and the French tagged along and made inroads into some of the littoral states like Indonesia and Vietnam. Japan held on, but the subversion of China through opium and hard drugs was in full swing. The West African slave trade had ended, leaving Africa exhausted and depleted of its manpower. Asia was in deep slumber and international trade was firmly in the hands of European companies.

India was the first great Asian civilization to fall to the European onslaught. The British made their first attempt to get a foothold in the subcontinent in 1686 during the reign of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb. Directed by Sir Josiah Child, the governor of the East India Company, a British fleet made an attempt to capture the harbor of Chittagong. The response of the Emperor was swift. The British were driven out and had to give up all their fortifications in Bengal. Similarly, on the west coast, they incurred the wrath of the Emperor when they engaged in piracy directed against the pilgrims to Mecca. They were expelled from Surat but were later allowed to return after paying a substantial fine.

However, the fortunes of India turned as the Moghul Empire disintegrated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Bengal fell at the Battle of Plassey (1757). Tippu Sultan waged a valiant struggle to contain and expel the British from India but he fell at the Battle of Srirangapatam (1799). The Marathas in Poona sued for peace in 1803. In 1806 British armies were camped near Red Fort in Delhi. The Sikhs in the Punjab held out a little longer, but by 1850, they too succumbed to the force of British arms and the subcontinent, save for the tribal areas of the Northwest Frontier, was in British hands.

It would seem astonishing that a great and prosperous landmass like India would fall with such ease to a handful of merchants from the British Isles. We have covered in some detail the march of global events that contributed to the rise of England. India imploded due to its own weight. The tensions introduced by power struggles between the princes, the absence of a national consciousness, lack of accurate information and intelligence about the global forces at work, neglect of naval technology and a general decay in the ethical standards of the ruling classes were all contributing factors. The British took advantage of these im-plosive forces and with an astonishingly small investment in men and material, made themselves masters of a great empire.

The rapacity of the British East India Company did not go unnoticed. During the hundred years since the fall of Bengal (1757), Company rule had reduced much of India into abject poverty. During the Moghul period, Bengal was the richest province of India and one of the richest in Asia. Blessed with the fertile delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers, it produced a surplus of food. Its manufactured goods included fine muslin cloth, brass work and sugar. Its cotton goods were in high demand the world over. Within eight years of its conquest by Robert Clive, Bengal was on its knees and what was once one of the richest provinces in Asia became one of the poorest. The accumulated capital in the possession of the Nawab of Bengal was looted and more than three million pounds were taken out of Calcutta. The manufacturing base was debilitated through heavy taxation and the market was flooded with cheap goods from England. The successors of Robert Clive were even more ruthless in their exploitation. Warren Hastings, the Governor General who succeeded Robert Clive, starved the begums (queens) of Oudh to extract from them their collection of jewels (1765). When Srirangapatam fell, the state treasury of

Tippu was looted and a sum of over two million rupees fell into British hands. The golden throne of Tippu was broken up, melted down and distributed among the conquering British troops. Similar episodes were repeated in the kingdoms where the Company managers, exploiting internal rivalries for succession, extracted large sums from the rajas and the nawabs. Surplus capital disappeared from India. The taxation imposed by the Company ensured that additional capital growth in native hands would be impossible. The Company's objective was profit and its relentless pursuit

made the Company managers oblivious of the welfare of the general population.

The rise of Company rule had two concurrent effects. The martial races in India, the Pathans, Rajputs, Afghans and the Marathas lost their power. Indeed, in many cases the Company troops went after the Indian warriors with a vengeance, as they did against the Afghan Rohillas in the Gangetic Plains (1765). As the warriors lost their power and faced impoverishment, the moneylenders spread their tentacles. In Bengal, for instance, the double blows British taxation and exploitative usury by Indian moneylenders devastated the peasant and merchant alike. Resentment against the British grew.

A second element in this growing resentment was the takeover of some of the native states by the Company in total disregard of treaty obligations. During its relentless military advance on Indian soil, the Company had entered into a series of treaties with a host of native princes as its “allies”. By 1850, the British stranglehold on India was so secure that they no longer needed these “allies” and the takeover of the native kingdoms began in utter disregard of legalities or treaty obligations. The motivation was greed and increased revenues for the Company. A variety of excuses were invented for such takeovers. One was the doctrine of “lapse” under which a kingdom could be taken over if a prince had no male heir. Another was the doctrine of “paramountcy” which was a catchall for supposed mismanagement by a local prince. During the tenure of Dalhousie as Governor General (1848-1856), the takeover of Indian territories was pursued with relentless vigor. First to fall was the kingdom of Satara (1848), once ruled by the mighty Peshwas. This was followed by the Rajput principalities of Jaipur, Udaipur and Jhansi, the Maratha stronghold of Nagpur, the kingdom of Sambalpur in Bengal and Baghat in the Punjab. Each takeover netted the British considerable cash from the native treasuries and ensured recurrent revenues from the land.

The annexation that tipped the scale in favor of an uprising was that of the large and prosperous kingdom of Oudh, which occupied the central plains of the Ganges River. In total disregard of a treaty made more than a half a century earlier, Company troops marched from Kanpur and forced the Nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah to give up his kingdom. Wajid Ali did not resist. Believing in his legal rights and in the rule of law, he appealed first to



the British Commissioner James Outram and then to the Governor General Dalhousie. Both turned a deaf ear to his protestations. Wajid Ali then took his case to London where his presentation received an equally cold shoulder. Wajid Ali, a prince schooled in the old paradigm of honor and contractual obligations, did not understand the paradigm of a merchant. To the East India Company, a treaty was only a piece of paper, to fall back on when it suited their self interest but to be torn up if it was to their advantage. Wajid Ali returned to India a bitter man and resolved to take up arms against the wily “Firangis” (from the word Frank, meaning a European).

A third element in the Uprising was the heavy-handed Company approach to taxation and revenue increase. Brushing aside treaty obligations, Dalhousie reduced or eliminated the hefty pensions of the Indian potentates who had served British interests in the past. Chief among them was the Nawab of Arcot and the Peshwa of Poona (1853). The adopted son of the Peshwa, Nana Sahib, became a leader of the incipient Sepoy Uprising. The process of land confiscation was not confined to the displacement of princes of blood but extended to secondary and tertiary levels as well. During the Moghul Raj (rule) and in the interregnum following its dismemberment, large jagirs had been conferred upon faithful courtiers. In turn, the local potentates had appointed talukdars to collect taxes and pass on the revenue to the higher authorities. The jagirs and taluks were held in perpetuity, from father to son and served as fiefdoms, which served as pillars of stability for the pleasure-loving rajas and nawabs. The Company abolished some of these jagirs and removed the talukdars so that the revenue from their properties accrued directly to the coffers of the Company. This bred resentment and when the spark of the Uprising was lit, some of the jagirdars and talukdars served as local focuses of revolt. In 1858, the British, realizing the importance of retaining the loyalty of the jagirdars and talukdars, reinstated many of the jagirs and hereditary taluks in northern India, thus creating a multi-layered hierarchy of local princes, jagirdars and talukdars whose loyalty to the British crown could be counted upon in times of trouble.

Perhaps the most important factor in the Great Indian Uprising was the injured religious sensibility of the Sepoys. Medieval India was a land of religion. The East India Company had entered the subcontinent as a venture

for profit. Unlike the Portuguese and the Spaniards who considered their military adventures a part of religious crusades, the British did not even allow evangelists to board their merchant ships. However, as British rule was consolidated, this picture gradually changed. The conquest of vast territories in Asia and Africa produced a sociology of dominance by Europeans. A feeling of superiority took root. A belief started to take hold that European religion and institutions were somehow superior to those of the “natives”. The Indians were not unaware of these attitudes. The growing resentment against the foreigners only needed a spark to explode.

The spark was lit in 1856, when the Company introduced the new Enfield rifle. The Enfield represented a considerable advance in design from prior models and offered the advantage of rapid firing. But the design was not “user friendly”. It was not sensitive to the religious feelings of its user, namely the Indian Sepoy. The paper wrapper of its cartridge was coated with lard and cow fat and a user was required to bite off the paper before he inserted the cartridge into the rifle. To a Muslim, the pig is an unclean animal, which he is forbidden to eat. To a Hindu, the cow is a sacred animal, which he is required to protect. The Indians felt that the new rifles were deliberately designed to defile the religion of Muslims and Hindus alike. It was seen as an attempt by the unbelieving foreigners to convert them to Christianity, which has no injunctions against the meat of the pig or the fat of the cow.

On May 7, 1857, on a hot, dusty parade ground in Meerat, a regiment of Indian Sepoys refused to accept the Enfield rifle as British artillery ringed them from all sides. The Sepoys were chained and led to the dungeons for “disobeying” orders. The following day Meerat exploded. The Sepoys rose up, quickly overpowered the British garrison and marched towards Delhi. The Delhi garrison joined the uprising and within three days, Delhi was back in Indian hands. The Moghul flag flew over the Red Fort and Bahadur Shah was reinstalled as the Emperor of Hindustan. Encouraged by this success, the Sepoys in Lucknow, Kanpur, Gwalior and Jhansi joined the Uprising. By the end of July, the British had lost control of the Gangetic Plains, extending from Meerat to Benares and of the central highlands. A Royal Proclamation from Delhi went forth to the cities of northern India and Pathans, Rajputs and Marathas alike joined the struggle.

The uprising did not succeed. To the Sikhs in the Punjab, who had fought the Great Moghuls in the previous century, a reinstatement of Moghul rule was unacceptable. The British Major Nicholson marched back to Delhi at the head of a Sikh regiment in September 1857. The Nizam of Hyderabad and some of the Rajput princes remained loyal to the British and sent contingents to help them. Coordination between the principal seats of the Great Uprising was minimal. The Emperor, an old man of seventy, was more interested in Urdu poetry than in the arts of war. He made no attempt to weld the various garrisons into a national force. The British, on the other hand, were determined and well led by experienced officers. The newly installed telegraph lines proved to be a boon to the besieged British garrisons between Lahore and Calcutta. The British, in addition, had the advantage of artillery and rapid firing guns and could call upon additional reinforcements by sea from as far away as South Africa and the Straits of Malacca. Nonetheless, it is a tribute to the tenacity of the Indians, that leaders like the Rani (queen) of Jhansi, Tantia Topi of the Marathas, General Bakht Khan of Delhi, Maulana Ahmadullah and Maulvi Ahmadullah of Faizabad continued their struggle well into the summer of 1858. The last mentioned was perhaps the most determined of the resistance fighters. Paying tribute to Maulvi Ahmadullah, Holmes, in his "History of the Indian Mutiny" wrote, "The Maulvi ... was a man fitted both by his spirit and his capacity to support a great cause and to command a great army ... He was a true patriot ... He had fought manfully, honorably and stubbornly in the field against the strangers who had seized his country and his memory is entitled to the respect of the brave and the true-hearted of all nations". The Rani of Jhansi died on the battlefield and Tantia Topi was caught by the British and hung like the other leaders of the Uprising.

The aftermath of the Uprising was gruesome for India and a disaster for the Muslims in northern India. Seeking vengeance, the victorious British showed no mercy to the vanquished. The entire population of Delhi was banished from that ancient city. The magnificent Moghul palaces in the Red Fort were demolished and in its place barracks were erected for the British cavalry. The vast area between the Red Fort and Jamia Masjid, wherein stood many a nobleman's home and an ancient mosque, was razed to the ground. Every house in the old city was broken into and looted. Thirty-three of the Moghul princes were butchered and the Moghul lineage came to an end. Week after week, the streets and bazaars of Old Delhi were witness to

mass hangings. Emperor Bahadur Shah himself was tried, like a common criminal and was finally banished to Rangoon in Burma, to die a forlorn man.

## **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh**

Critical moments in history are like earthquakes. They manifest themselves as convulsions releasing the pent up stresses of generations. When the tremors are over, they leave behind a legacy, which becomes a prelude to the next major event. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857-1858 was one such event. With it medieval India died and in its wake grew social and political movements that paved the way for the emergence of the modern nations of India and Pakistan.

India was the first country where Muslims were faced with a challenge to define their interface with two global civilizations from a position of political weakness. European arms and diplomacy had smashed their power. The Sepoy Uprising confirmed this loss of power. The initial response of the Muslims to this debacle was to stay aloof from the British, to shun their language, institutions, culture and methods. Withdrawal only increased their isolation and set them behind in the race for political and social re-awakening. At the same time, the Hindus whom the Muslims had dominated for 500 years appeared poised to dominate them. The changing relationships were most acutely felt in the Gangetic plain, in the populous region extending from Delhi to Calcutta. And it was this region that set the tone for the interaction between the Muslims, the Europeans and the Hindus in the years to come.

What was the appropriate relationship between Islam and Christian Europe? The legacy of the Crusades in the Mediterranean region was not an encouraging one. In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Muslims conquered vast areas of the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and southwestern Europe and displaced Christianity with their own faith. In a counter thrust, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the Christians wrested Spain and Portugal from the Muslims and in the succeeding centuries, completely extirpated Islam from the Andalusian peninsula. The English thrust at India in the 18th century was primarily mercantile and motivated by economic domination.

Nonetheless, the history of interactions between Islam and Christianity did not provide a framework for a mutually satisfactory accommodation.

With the large Hindu population of India, the situation was somewhat different. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim armies, after their swift advance through Persia, had paused at the Indus River. For 500 years thereafter, the Indus River roughly defined the geographical boundary between Muslim dominions and northern India, which was dominated by the Rajputs. The situation changed when Muhammed Ghorī captured Delhi in 1192, and from that date onward until the arrival of the British, the Indo-Gangetic plain was ruled by successive Muslim dynasties. Some of the Muslim monarchs, such as Alauddin Khilji, Muhammed bin Tughlaq and Jalaluddin Akbar, treated their Indian subjects fairly. Most were content to collect taxes from Hindus and Muslims alike and made no attempt either to facilitate the spread of Islam or to deter it. Except in the northwest and the northeast, Islam remained a super-layer on a fossilized Hindu society. The two great communities continued to coexist but did not co-mingle. The powerful Islamic message of equality of man ensured that the Muslims were not submerged in the Hindu caste matrix, yet the rigidity of Hindu society was too tenacious for Islam to displace Hinduism.

Sufic Islam tried to bridge the gap between the various communities of India. The sufis arrived in the Indo-Gangetic plain at about the same time they emerged in Central Asia and North Africa. The spiritual and physical space of the sufi qanqahs was secular in which men and women of all faiths were welcome. With their emphasis on love, brotherhood, service and openness to local culture, they convinced a large number of Indians to accept Islam so that by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims constituted roughly a quarter of the total population of the subcontinent.

The numerical inferiority of the Muslims was compensated by their political and cultural dominance. Only in the field of economics did the Hindus fare better. The far-sighted among the Muslim monarchs found it wise to accept the services of Hindu ministers to rationalize their tax collection systems. With the advent of British rule, the advantages that the Muslims had enjoyed were chipped away. Political and military ascendancy was the first casualty. Bengal (1757), Oudh (1765) and Mysore (1799) fell one by one. Some of the potentates, such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, found it more expedient to accept the protection of the British than to fight them.

The second front was economic. The thriving manufacturing industry and the trade guilds of Bengal were ruined by the deliberate policies of the Company who saw Hindustan as a vast market for its goods. Where industry faltered, usury crept in. Since interest was forbidden in Islam, the Muslims stayed away from usury. Hindu moneylenders had no such taboo and they moved in as credit suppliers for the impoverished masses.

Language was the third front. In 1835, the East India Company introduced English medium schools and replaced Persian with English in the higher courts. Persian, the lingua franca of Muslim Asia, was the court language of Delhi for 500 years. The displacement of Persian as the court language not only severed intellectual contacts between Muslim India and Persia, it also stripped the advantage that Muslims had enjoyed in education. The Hindus had nothing to lose by this change and embraced English education with open arms and moved to fill in whatever government positions were offered by the British to Indians. The educational gap between the Hindu and Muslim communities increased. This in turn augmented mutual suspicions, jealousy and social tensions.

The Sepoy Uprising of 1857-1858 released the pent up tensions between India and the British and proved to be a calamity for the Muslims. Defeat prompted withdrawal. It was the contribution of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan that he brought the Muslims of northern India from their cocoon and made them face the historical currents so they could participate in the molding of their own destiny. His response to the British and to the Hindus was markedly different. He foresaw, that British rule, no matter how entrenched it seemed at the time, was ultimately bound to disappear. But the Hindus were neighbors, living with the Muslims. Two global faiths, Islam and Hinduism, had arrived in India at different historical epochs and each claimed the same land as its homeland. In the dialogue to coexist and co-prosper, the adherents of the two faiths were largely unsuccessful and in their failure they left behind the legacy of partition and the accompanying holocaust of

1947.

In the aftermath of the Sepoy Uprising, the Muslim intelligentsia in northern India was decimated. Under the incessant hammer of British persecution, Muslims in the Indo-Gangetic belt recoiled from active participation in national life. Too proud to accept defeat at the hands of the “infidels”, mired in the glory of a bygone era, imprisoned in a paradigm of

Persian-Arabic education, suspicious of an emerging Hindu educated class, exploited by money lenders and talukdars, they sank deeper into a despondency with each passing year. The British carried their vendetta into the succeeding decades. Open discrimination was practiced against the Muslims in government jobs. The result was a general decay in the economic and political status of the Muslims and an increasing gap between the Muslims and Hindus in education and social awareness. This chasm was to have a profound effect on the events that unfolded in the last quarter of the century when Sir Syed Ahmed Khan launched his educational reform movement (1875) and the Indian National Congress was founded (1885). Indeed, the increasing gap in the economic and educational well being of Hindus and Muslims had a decisive impact on the shape of the struggle for the independent nations of India and Pakistan.

The thrust of European arms and ideas evoked a wide spectrum of responses in the Muslim world. The Ottomans resisted this thrust until the resistance was destroyed during the First World War. In Egypt and Turkey the impact of European ideas influenced the reform movements of Muhammed Ali Pasha, Sultan Abdul Hamid and the Young

Turks. In India it produced the reform movement of Syed Ahmed Khan.

In the dialectic between Europe and the Muslim world, Syed Ahmed Khan of India occupies a unique position. He was perhaps the first Muslim leader to contemplate the possibility of coexistence between the two global civilizations. Muslim reformers before him had either totally disregarded the European challenge (Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Shaykh Abdul Wahhab of Arabia and Shehu Dan Fuduye of Nigeria fall into this category) or were hostile to any accommodation with Europe. The initiatives taken by Sir Syed had far reaching consequences for the Muslims. He demonstrated the possibility of coexistence and cooperation between the European and Islamic civilizations, although in his own lifetime, with the British firmly entrenched in India, he could achieve no more than a supportive role for Indian Muslims.

Syed Ahmed Khan was born in 1817 near Delhi, into a distinguished family. He received his early education in the traditional disciplines of Qur'an and Hadith and was then exposed to an English education. When the Sepoy Uprising of 1857 broke out, he was employed with the Company as a civil servant in the "Northwestern Provinces", as the area west of Oudh



was then called. The carnage of the Uprising and the subsequent decimation of the Muslim intelligentsia left a major void in the Islamic community of northern India. The initial response of the community was to conserve and withdraw into its social cocoon. While the British viewed the Muslims with deep suspicion, the Muslims shunned the British as infidels and foreigners who had usurped what had been rightfully theirs. Hostility and resentment fed upon each other and it looked like the Muslims would miss the opportunity to be a part of the new order imposed by newcomers from the British Isles.

While the Muslims remained aloof from British administration, the Hindus, Parsis and other communities forged ahead in education and social development. The replacement of Persian by English as the language of the higher courts (1835) was resented by the Muslims but was welcomed by the other communities. They embraced English education much more eagerly than did the Muslims. In 1878 there were 3155 college educated Hindus as against 57 college educated Muslims. In a country, growing poorer by the year due to Company practices, government service was a major career path for poor people and the Muslims missed these opportunities. The situation was particularly acute in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Since the fall of Bengal in 1757, all of the higher positions in civilian, military and judiciary service were reserved for the British. The more educated Hindus filled the lower positions that were open to Indians. The Muslims were practically shut out.

Syed Ahmed Khan saw the dangers in this isolationist posture. As long as mutual suspicion and hostility persisted between the Muslims and the British, the former would be excluded from participation in the political and social life of the country. Sir Syed visited England in 1870 and came back with a conviction that English education was a key to the advancement of the Muslims. In 1877 he established the “Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College” at Aligarh. The name of the college was self-descriptive and its orientation was decidedly western. It faced immediate hostility from the Muslim religious establishment. Mullahs denounced him as a “turncoat” and a “kafir”. Undaunted, Sir Syed persisted. He invited a noted Englishman, Theodore Beck to serve as the first principal of the College. As hostility towards his efforts intensified in the areas around Delhi, he traveled throughout the Punjab in search of support and funds. Punjabi Muslims, who felt the British had recently liberated them from the Sikhs,

welcomed Sir Syed with open arms and generously provided him moral and material support.

Aligarh College grew by the year and soon became a center for Muslim educational and political activities in northern India, although its doors were open to all communities and many distinguished British as well as Hindu professors served on its faculty. The college served as a magnet for young men and women from families of zamindars and peasants alike from all over India. It provided a boost to the Muslims in their competition with the other communities for government jobs. But it was in the political arena that its impact was most profoundly felt. Graduates of Aligarh University were in the forefront of the political struggle in India and their efforts were decisive in the struggle for Pakistan.

Economics was yet another area where the Muslims fell behind the larger community. Following the Battle of Plassey (1757), the manufacturing base of Bengal was destroyed by the discriminatory policies of the Company. The artisans and merchants, who were primarily Muslim, were economically ruined. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 imposed Hindu landlords on the Muslim population of Bengal. In 1858, following the Sepoy Uprising, when the zamindari system was reinstated by the British in Uttar Pradesh, the Hindus were the primary beneficiaries. Thus in the crucial area between Delhi and Calcutta, the Muslim economic condition went from bad to worse. Only in parts of the Punjab, Sindh and the Frontier areas, where the Pathans and some Punjabis had cooperated with the British, was there a remnant of Muslim landed aristocracy.

Given the educational, political and social backwardness of the Indian Muslim community, Sir Syed felt that its best option was to cooperate with the British. As long as mutual suspicion and hostility between the British and the Muslims of northern India persisted, the latter could not take advantage of any opportunities that a more cooperative environment might present. Accordingly, Sir Syed recommended to the Muslims that their interest, for the time being at any rate, lay in seeking a working relationship with the British. This position was at odds with that of the Hindu nationalists. Since the Hindus were far more advanced educationally and they were also the numerical majority, they could package the demands of their community in a “nationalist” terminology. For the Hindus there was co-linearity of a national and communal vision. This was not so for the

Muslims. Except in the northwest and the northeast, they were a small minority in the great landmass of the subcontinent. The aftermath of the 1857-1858 uprising, the decimation of their leadership, their educational backwardness and their numerical inferiority ensured that they could not compete with the Hindus on equal terms.

The years following the Great Uprising saw the first stirrings of a nationalist movement in India. Most of the nationalists were English-speaking Hindus and Parsis. An English education gave the Hindus not only access to government jobs but enabled them to articulate their social and political aspirations. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 by an Englishman Allan Hume to encourage Indians to provide input and feedback to the government on how the administration of the Raj could be improved. In later years, the Congress grew to be the most powerful political organization in British India and political demands grew to give political representation to the Indians. Sir Syed was concerned that the Muslims would be submerged in a vastly Hindu India should political initiative pass on to the Hindus. He articulated the fears of the Muslim community in these words:

“India, a continent in itself is inhabited by vast populations of different races and different creeds. The rigor of religious institutions has kept even neighbors apart. The system of caste is still dominant and powerful ... In a country like India where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of the various races, where religious distinctions are still violent, where education in its modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all the sections of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests on the local boards and district councils would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations ... The larger community would totally override the interests of the smaller community and the ignorant public would hold Government responsible for introducing measures which might make differences of race and creed more violent than ever.”

Sir Syed opposed the participation of Muslims in the Indian National Congress as he was concerned that representative government based on a one man-one vote concept would leave the Muslims at the mercy of the more numerous Hindus. His fears were reinforced by the movement in 1867

to replace Urdu, a language that had evolved through a Hindu-Muslim linguistic synthesis, with Sanskritized Hindi. Sir Syed saw that education, at least western education, far from bringing the two great communities of the subcontinent closer together, was separating them further apart. As the movement to replace Urdu with Hindi gathered momentum, he wrote: “ I am convinced that the two communities will not sincerely cooperate in any work. Opposition and hatred between them which is felt so little today, will in the future be seen to increase on account of the so-called educated classes.”

Sir Syed's opposition to Muslim participation in the Indian National Congress was based on his conviction that the Muslims of his day were not ready to compete with the other communities in education and politics. The destruction of the manufacturing base in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh had eliminated the artisans and merchants who had formed the economic backbone for the Moghul Empire. The moneylenders and the talukdars, most of whom were Hindu, now took their place. The differences between the two communities were exacerbated in the aftermath of the Sepoy Uprising of 1857-1858. The British had singled out Muslim leaders for punishment. In Delhi alone, over 27,000 Muslims were hanged, with many thousands more in Meerat, Lucknow and Allahabad. With the introduction of English as the medium of instruction, Muslims had fallen further behind. Meanwhile, the Hindus had taken advantage of the new opportunities, had acquired education and were able to fill any positions offered the Indians. Sir Syed felt that the introduction of representative government at that stage in history would solidify the advantage of the Hindu community over the Muslims and would relegate the latter to a permanent handicap.

Sir Syed did not live to see the full impact of the reforms introduced by him. It was left to later generations to realize the benefits of his initiatives in education and politics. He passed away in 1898. Twenty-three years after his death, in 1921 Aligarh College blossomed into Aligarh Muslim University and became a magnet for Muslim intellectual activity in the subcontinent. The generations that came after him derived their inspiration from the legacy of Sir Syed and went on to carve out their own destiny. He stood tall among the reformers of the 19th century who gave a new lease and a new direction to Islamic civilization.

Some among the later generations would call him a revolutionary, some would label him an apologist, but there is no doubt that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan opened the door to communication between the Muslims and the Europeans. Until he came along, this door had been locked shut with a steel bar of mutual suspicion and hostility.

## **The Tanzeemat of the Ottoman Empire**

Tanzeemat (Turkish, plural of tanzeem, organization, discipline) is a term used for the processes, institutions and administrative changes initiated between 1839 and 1878 by the grand viziers Mustafa Rashid Pasha, Mohammed Amin Ali Pasha and Mustafa Fuad Pasha and implemented during the reigns of Sultan Abdul Majid (1839-1861) and Sultan Abdul Aziz (1861-1876). With some modifications, the tanzeemat continued during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) and lasted until 1908. The over-arching goal of the tanzeemat was to save the empire by reforming its legislative, administrative and judiciary institutions and processes. They sought to improve administrative efficiency, streamline tax collection, modernize education and make the government more responsive to the people by giving them a voice in its operation. In the process, the architects of the tanzeemat experimented with centralization and decentralization, Ottomanism and secularism, pan Islamism and pan Turkism. They were successful in modifying the structure of Ottoman institutions. In so doing, they changed the character of Ottoman society and set in motion secular forces that ended with the triumph of the Young Turks (1908) and the destruction of the Sultanate itself (1913-1924).

In 1800, the Ottoman Empire was still the largest land empire in the interconnecting landmass of Afro-Eurasia. Extending from Algeria in the Maghrib, it embraced all of the lands of the southern Mediterranean. From Egypt it branched out to include portions of the Sudan and the coastal lands of the Red Sea, jetting into the Sinai and including the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Iraq, Anatolia and northern Azerbaijan. In Europe it had lost Hungary, Transylvania and Crimea, but it still controlled the Balkans including Romania, Bosnia, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Rumelia. It had a population of 20 million, about three fourths Muslim and the rest divided between Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian and Coptic Christians as well as a prosperous Jewish community. This vast empire was

self-sufficient in food, with the fertile lands of Egypt, Iraq and Rumelia producing enough grain to sustain the population.

The Ottoman Empire was multi-ethnic, multi-national and multi-religious. While the Muslims were more numerous in West Asia and North Africa, the Orthodox Church had a major presence in the Balkans. Further north, in the border areas of Bosnia, as well as in Lebanon, the Catholics had a strong position. The Armenians were primarily resident in the area around Lake Van, while the Coptic presence was noticeable in Egypt and Syria. Each of the major religious groups was itself divided into a plethora of nationalities. The Turks, Arabs, Egyptians, Berbers, Albanians, Bosnians and Circassians were the major ethnic groups among the Muslims. The Eastern Orthodox included the Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs and the Romanians. These nationalities competed for turf and privilege and were often at loggerheads with each other. The presence of religious shrines in Palestine, considered holy by Muslims, Christians and Jews alike, added to the religious tensions in the empire and on more than one occasion, kindled the flames of war.

This multi-religious, multi-ethnic state was organized in accordance with the dictates of the Shariah. Each religious group was called a millet, which meant that the state accepted it as the follower of a prophet, with a revealed book and a code of ethics. In numerical terms, there were three major millets in the empire: the Muslims, the Orthodox Christians and the Catholics. In addition, the Jews, Armenians, Copts and Druze were also accorded the status of millets. The Armenians, with about 6% of the population, were dispersed in eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan and the southern Caucasus. The Copts, with about 3% of the population were mainly in the Cairo-Alexandria belt. The Jews, constituting about 2% of the population, had a notable presence in

Istanbul, Solonika and Sarajevo. In accordance with the Shariah, each millet was accorded full autonomy in the observance of its personal laws and in matters relating to its religious observances. Where a judicial matter involved the followers of more than one religious group, it was taken up by mixed courts, or resolved in a higher court, presided over by a kadi (judge).

Military service was obligatory for Muslims. A Muslim young man, when called upon to do so, had to serve up to four years in the army followed by six years in the reserves and ten years in the home guard,

although wealthy Muslims could buy an excuse at a price fixed by the state and send a substitute instead. The non-Muslims were exempt from military service in payment of the jizya. This was a tax levied only on able-bodied men; the old, the infirm, women and children were exempt from it. In return, the state provided them military protection and an opportunity to further their civilian careers while the Muslim young men served in the army. In monetary terms, the jizya was less than the sum a Muslim man had to pay to buy an excuse from military service. As we shall see, this system of administration, while it accorded autonomy and dignity to persons of all faiths, was used by interested European powers, acting presumably as protectors of one religious group or another, to exert pressures and demand concessions from the Ottomans.

Five major institutions held the empire together: the army, the civilian bureaucracy, the Vizierate or the Porte, the Grand Mufti or Shaykh ul Islam and the office of the Sultan-Caliph. In addition, the harem exerted significant influence on the decision making process through the Chief Eunuch, who acted as a conduit of communication between the Queen Mother, the ladies of the palace and the state functionaries. The standing army varied in strength from time to time. In 1800, it stood at 120,000 men, supplemented by about an equal number of sipahis, auxiliary troops and Tatar cavalymen. Morale and discipline were high but the armed forces were at a measurable disadvantage with respect to their European counterparts in armaments, techniques and organization. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing, and European rapid firing muskets and long-range cannons had far outstripped the gunnery then in use by the Ottomans. Napoleon Bonaparte had given a stunning demonstration of the superiority of European arms and battle formations during his invasion of Egypt and Syria (1799).

A vast bureaucracy administered the empire in collaboration with the local fiefs, landlords and village notables. Tax collection was inefficient and at the mercy of the tax farmers (local landlords and chiefs delegated with the responsibility of tax collection) who pocketed a portion of the collections in return for their services. The system was stable, albeit at the expense of the cultivators, whose only interface with the ruling elite was through the taxman. The executive branch was headed by the sublime Porte, (or the Vizierate) headed by the grand vizier, who was appointed by the



Sultan. It was the grand vizier who carried out the fermans, or edicts, of the Sultan. Assisted by a Council of Ministers, he acted as the interface with foreign powers and often led the armed forces in war. The judiciary was nominally independent and under the overall supervision of the Shaykh ul Islam, who was also appointed by the Sultan. The shaykh was the custodian of the Shariah and his person carried enormous prestige with the ulema. His consent was sought prior to a declaration of war, or on occasions, before the dethronement of a Sultan. The power of the various functionaries flowed from the authority of the Sultan-caliph; they served with his consent and at his pleasure. He appointed or fired any of the executives or judges in his realm, including the grand vizier and the Shaykh ul Islam. In addition, as the Caliph of all Sunni Muslims in the world, he had the responsibility to protect the ummah against the “infidels” and to discharge the functions of the guardian of faith and the Shariah. Only the Shaykh ul Islam could make a pronouncement about a specific act of the Sultan and that too at great risk to his own person. The ladies of the court wielded significant power in the affairs of the realm and this they exercised by influencing the Sultan in his appointment of senior executives and through the chief eunuch who conveyed their wishes to the principal functionaries.

The structure of the empire was pyramidal with the Sultan-caliph at its apex. To their credit, the Ottomans were well served by a series of capable monarchs and grand viziers, who held the empire together for 600 years. In this grand undertaking, they proved themselves to be extremely resourceful in utilizing the injunctions of the Shariah to construct political institutions and evolve social systems that stood the test of time. The millet structure, which provided judicial and legal autonomy to each religious group, was a major anchor of this system. It was sanctioned by the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and proved as capable of ensuring social and political stability in the 17th century as it had in the 7th century. It provided a framework in which a heterogeneous society composed of different religious groups, could work as a unit towards the creation of a civilization. But in the 19th century, this grand vision of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire came up against the competing European idea of nation states. Religion became secondary to nationalism and a mere vehicle for an expression of national aspirations. The powerful states of Russia, Austria-Hungary, France and Britain were able to use religion as a mechanism to

incite the various nationalities within the Ottoman Empire against it and further their own interests.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was like an old oak tree that had decayed from within. A patent weakness in military technology, coupled with the inefficiency of an age-old bureaucracy, had sapped its vitality. Gone were the days when Europe trembled at the prospect of Sulaiman the Magnificent marching into Central Europe and knocking at the gates of Vienna.

Now it was the turn of Europe to counterattack, dismember the empire and benefit from its demise. The Ottoman Empire was able to survive another hundred years, not so much because of its military prowess, but because of the rivalries among the principal European powers as to who would pick up the pieces once the empire dissolved. The resulting balance of power did provide the Ottomans a respite in which to reform their institutions, catch up with Europe in technology and perhaps even save the empire from an inevitable demise.

In the latter part of the 18th century, the triumph of European arms over the more traditional arms then in use in Asia and Africa motivated emirs and Sultans alike to seek the technology and techniques of the West. The first to make a move in this direction was Tippu Sultan of Mysore, India. Starting in the year 1760, he and his father Hyder Ali, sought out French assistance in military organization and weapons technology. They were successful in creating the finest fighting machine in India, armed with long-range rifles, rockets and cannon, which held the British Empire at bay for forty years. Tippu fell in battle in the year 1799, a victim of schisms among Indian princes and of British scheming. The next to seek modernization of his armed forces was Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt. As Napoleon withdrew from the Nile delta (1799), Mohammed Ali reorganized the Turkish-Egyptian garrison in Cairo, supplied it with French muskets, brought in French instructors and built it into a fine fighting machine. In 1805, when the British tried to take Alexandria by force of arms, Mohammed Ali was able to beat them back.

In the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) initiated a series of reforms against the opposition of the Janissaries and the entrenched conservatives. A military wakeup call came in 1820 when a rebellion broke out in Greece. Small bands of Greeks, armed and trained by the European

powers, were able to inflict severe damage upon the Ottoman garrisons. Sultan Mahmud II was able to use the Ottoman reverses to dismantle the Janissaries (1826) and start the modernization of the army.

The Greek rebellion must be looked at in the broader context of the increasing military power of Russia and its long-range ambition to reach the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire, extending in an arc from the Adriatic to the Caspian Sea, was like a solid wall preventing this access. Indeed, the strategic location of the Ottoman Empire to the south of the Russian Empire was the single most important factor in the Balkan wars that raged throughout the 19th century and spilled over into the twentieth century. In 1769, the Russians took the important base of Azov on the Don River and broke through to the Black Sea. In 1789 they captured the Crimea, denying the Ottomans the manpower of the Crimean Tatars and the use of the seaports on the northern shores of the Black Sea. Russia could now dream of reaching the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles. In the succeeding decades,

Russian pressure on the Ottomans continued. The toll on Ottoman manpower and resources was enormous. As the vulnerability of the Ottomans became apparent, Britain, France and Austria-Hungary saw in an expansionist Russia a threat to their own interests. France had her eyes on North Africa; Britain coveted Egypt, while Austria-Hungary had her designs on the Balkans. Hence, the western powers sought to prop up the Ottoman Empire against Russia, even while they chipped away at it from the south and the west.

One military debacle after another faced the Ottomans in the decades of the 1820s and 1830s. The Greek revolt gathered momentum and by 1827, the Greek national forces had taken control of Morea. France, Britain and Russia demanded Ottoman acceptance of Greek independence, but when the Porte refused and called in naval reinforcements from Egypt, a joint European naval attack force destroyed the Ottoman and Egyptian navies at the Battle of Navarino (1827). This event marked an important milestone in the history of the Mediterranean.

Stripped of their navy, the Ottomans could not supply and defend their distant provinces in North Africa. Algiers fell to a determined French assault in 1830. Algeria became a French colony and remained so until the Algerian War of Independence in 1960. Meanwhile, the Russians, declaring

themselves to be champions of their fellow Orthodox Greeks, invaded the empire and in a two-pronged drive around the Black Sea, moved through Romania and Bulgaria to within thirty miles of Istanbul. In the east, they occupied Erzurum and Trebizond and threatened complete occupation of Anatolia. The Ottomans were saved by the diplomatic intervention of Britain and France. This was a convincing demonstration of a Russian military capability to reach Istanbul. Ottoman preoccupation with this threat was a primary driver of their foreign policy through the rest of the century. By the Treaty of Edirne (1828), the Ottomans ceded to the Russians the region of the southern Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and accepted Russian intervention in the provinces of Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. The independence of Greece was formally ratified in 1830.

Further military reverses were awaiting the Ottomans. In 1830,

Mohammed Ali Pasha, Governor of Egypt, demanded compensation from the Porte for his assistance during the Greek insurrection, as well as the hereditary title of Khedive. When the Porte refused, Mohammed Ali sent an expeditionary force into Syria under his son Ibrahim Pasha to compel the Sultan to agree to his demands. In a series of engagements, Ibrahim overcame Ottoman resistance, advanced through Gaza, Haifa, Damascus and Beirut to take Konya (1833). The Egyptians could have taken Istanbul, but European intervention forced Mohammed Ali to call off his troops in return for recognition of his demands by the Sultan. The triumph of the Egyptian forces, supplied with European arms, spurred the modernization of the Ottoman forces. Sultan Mahmud ordered an acceleration of the reforms he had started twenty years earlier, instituting training for army officers, sending them to Europe for instruction, starting technical institutes, reforming education and overhauling the administrative apparatus. He brought in Russian officers to train the infantry, British engineers to build forts, and Prussians to supply and train artillerymen. The initiatives taken by Sultan Mahmud provided the momentum for the reforms that were to follow after his reign.

The *tanzimat* were led by Mustafa Rashid Pasha, who started life as the son of a clerk and became one of the most powerful grand viziers in Ottoman history. He started his career as a scribe, and while on assignment to Morea in the 1820s, witnessed first hand the debacle of Ottoman forces at the hands of the Greek nationalists. He saw first hand the inefficiency of the

administration while employed in the Ottoman bureaucracy. During the Russian-Turkish war of 1826-1828, he was a seal bearer to the grand vizier. He impressed his superiors with his dispatches from the theaters of war and was given increasing responsibilities. In 1833, he was a member of the team that negotiated with Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt. As foreign minister (1837-1840) and ambassador to France (1840-1845) he traveled through Europe and had an opportunity to study its institutions. He became grand vizier in 1846 and served in that capacity for six terms of various durations until his death in 1858. It was largely through his initiative that Sultan Abdul Majid I issued the imperial proclamation of 1839, which guaranteed equality before the law to all citizens of the empire and set in motion the reform processes.

The tanzeemat centralized power in the Porte at the expense of the palace and the provincial governors. Sultan Abdul Majid and Sultan Abdul Aziz supported the Tanzeemat even while attempting to control them through their own appointments. The mechanism for legislative reform was the establishment in 1838 of the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances, consisting of senior members from the various ministries and the bureaucracy. It became the principal body for formulating legislation. Suggestions for possible legislative action were submitted to the Council by the various departments and ministers. The Council discussed, debated, modified and prepared the legislation, which was then submitted to the Sultan for his approval. An attempt was made to evolve a consensus in the Council, but disagreement was tolerated, and where there was no meeting of the minds, the majority opinion was submitted to the Sultan with the minority dissenting opinion included as an appendix, so that the Sultan could make up his own mind as to the pros and cons of a proposal. This was a major shift from the old Ottoman system wherein legislation originated from the Imperial Council attached to the palace. As time went on, the Supreme Council was also given the authority to initiate its own legislation and submit it to the Sultan. The volume of legislative work was enormous and as the burden increased, the process of reform slowed.

The second generation of Tanzeemat reformers, led by Grand Viziers Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, were impatient with the pace of change. In 1858, they supplemented the Supreme Council with another legislative body, the High Council of the Tanzeemat to speed up the process. There was some

confusion between the two bodies due to overlapping responsibilities. Therefore, in 1861, the two Councils were merged into a single legislative body, the new Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances, with separate departments for legislative, administrative and judiciary matters and clearly defined areas of responsibility. Overall coordination of the legislative functions was performed by the Council of Ministers, whose members were appointed by the Sultan. The ministers could change the proposed legislation before its submittal to the Sultan. Since the ministers were appointed directly by the Sultan, the grand vizier, who had the overall executive responsibility in the empire, had only limited authority over his own ministers. This dissociation of responsibility from authority had its own inherent inefficiencies and the grand vizier had to get results more through goodwill than through sheer brawn. Although the *tanzimat* allowed for inputs from the bureaucrats and the Sultans themselves were supportive of most of the initiatives, the legislative structure remained pyramidal; the process was directed from the top, creating a measure of tension between the palace, the Porte and the legislative councils.

The most pressing issue before the Ottomans was defense of the empire. The Ottoman dam contained the Russian flood. A vigorous program of modernizing the armed forces began in 1841. The army was divided into seven corps, one based in each of the major provinces. A *mushir* or field marshal, reporting to the grand marshal or *sereskar* in Istanbul, headed each corps, which was further divided into regiments and platoons with a specific number of cavalry, infantry and artillerymen as required for the defense of each district. The total strength of the army was increased to 185,500 with each corps containing 26,500 men. This standing army was supplemented, in times of war, with an additional 60,000 *sipahis*, or irregulars. Rapid firing muskets and large cannons were bought from Prussia. Prussian officers were hired to train the Ottomans in the use of these weapons. An efficient system of storage and supply was set up at each of the principal army bases. All eligible Muslim males were required to serve in the army for a period of four years, starting at age seventeen, followed by seven years in the reserves and twelve years in the home guard. The navy received added attention too; however, after the disastrous Battle of Navarino (1827), the Ottoman and Egyptian navies did not recover their former stature and their role in subsequent military developments was marginal at best.

The superiority of European naval technology was obvious as early as the Battle of Lepanto (1571). After the Battle of St. Gotthard (1680), this superiority had shown itself in the land forces as well. The Ottomans managed to hold the line for much of the 18 th century because the

European powers were pre-occupied with their own internal rivalries over control of the Americas and the Indian Ocean. As these rivalries were sorted out, with the British emerging as the victors, the pressures on the Ottomans increased. Even the Russians, who were mired in a feudal society, learned from the west Europeans during the reign of Peter and forged ahead of the Ottomans. By the 1830s, the technology gap between Europe and Asia had become a wide chasm and the tanzeemat sought to redress this imbalance.

Modernization of the armed forces required a cadre of men trained in technical disciplines as well as in mathematics, physics and medicine. The need to revamp the educational system became acute as the technology gap between Europe and Asia widened. The old system of education in the Ottoman Empire was based on the maktab. These were religious schools run by the local ulema and they were focused on imparting the children a basic knowledge of the Qur'an, the hadith, rituals of religious obligations and Ottoman history. Most of the students were boys. The few girls who did attend school dropped out after the first four years. Secondary schools or madrasahs offered more instruction in the traditional disciplines as well as optional courses geared towards preparing the students for service in the vast Ottoman bureaucracy. Higher education was designed to train a few alims, men versed in various schools of Fiqh, who could serve as local kadis in the courts of Shariah. Artisans and architects learned their trades through apprenticeship in the guilds attached to the local sufi zawiyas.

This education was a caricature of the comprehensive system of education in the classical Islamic era. When the Fatimids founded the first university at Al Azhar in Cairo in 969 and the Abbasids established the Nizamiya College in Baghdad soon thereafter, the syllabus included not just Arabic grammar, Qur'an and Fiqh; it embraced philosophy, mathematics, logic and medicine. The education was integrative, holistic and it produced the hakims of the classical era, men like Al Ghazzali and Ibn Sina, who made profound contributions to the reservoir of human knowledge and provided the intellectual energy for a renovation of Islamic civilization.

In the intervening thousand years, the classical system of education had been demolished, the rational sciences were removed from the curriculum, Muslims turned their backs on philosophy and empirical science and Muslim society itself had been transformed. It did not produce the trained men and women who could maintain a competitive edge in the increasingly brutal confrontations with Europe. Frustrated, the army moved ahead with the establishment of a military academy in Istanbul wherein military sciences, physics, mathematics and medicine were taught but there was a dearth of qualified applicants with the pre-requisite education in mathematics and the natural sciences. The traditional system of maktab had failed to keep up with the advances being made in science and technology. It did not even impart the rudimentary training in mathematics and physics that are pre-requisites to a career in science, engineering and medicine.

The tanzeemat sought to redress within a single generation the neglect of a thousand years. With a technologically advanced Europe breathing down their necks, they set out to reform the education system, its orientation, its content and its output. The initial momentum was provided by the initiatives taken earlier by Sultan Mahmud II (d. 1839), who had established a system of middle schools, called the Rushdiye schools, wherein arithmetic and physics were taught along with the traditional disciplines. Such schools had been established in the principal cities of the empire including Istanbul, Solonika, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Sarajevo and Erzurum. In 1846, a Council of Public Education was established within the Department of Trade but it would take another 20 years before a Ministry of Public Education was set up. Instruction in the public schools was enlarged to include science and mathematics in addition to Ottoman history, geography and the traditional religious subjects. Non-Muslim students received instruction in their own religious disciplines. To coordinate the work of various directorates in education, a Council of Education was set up by the Public Education Act of 1869. Each province also had an education director whose responsibilities included the supervision of schools, buildings, books, syllabus, examinations and teachers' salaries.

Secular education received a major boost as a result of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Education was made compulsory for all children up to the age of twelve. In 1869, French specialists were brought in as advisors to the



Ministry of Public Education. Following their recommendations, a three-tier system of education involving primary, middle and secondary schools was set up wherein mathematics, physics, natural sciences, history, Turkish, Farsi and Arabic languages as well as the local language were taught. At the higher levels, technical institutes were established. These included the War College, Civil Service College, Army and Navy engineering schools, the School of Medicine and the Military Academy. In each institute, besides specialized instruction in a specific field, the humanities and social sciences were also taught.

The evolution of an educational system more responsive to the needs of the empire was slow, in part because of the opposition of the religious establishment. Some of the ulema looked askance at the new education because it meant a decrease in their power. To mollify them, the old madrasahs were continued in parallel with the Rushdiye schools. In addition, there was a lack of trained teachers and textbooks as well as persistent difficulties with the non-Muslim minorities who remained recalcitrant and preferred to stay in their own millet schools. Acceptance of the new education was slow among the Muslims who associated a secular education with the West. As late as 1895, there were far more students in the traditional madrasahs than in the Rushdiye schools. Women's education lagged far behind that of men. In 1895, whereas 90% of the men had received some schooling, only 30% of the women had done so. To redress this imbalance, a separate higher school for women was founded in Istanbul (1870) but admission remained low. In addition, the tanzeemat established schools for orphans and an industrial institute for poor children where they could receive training in a useful trade. There were also a number of foreign schools set up by missionaries, such as the American Robert College (1863). Their orientation was decidedly anti-Ottoman and anti-Muslim and their presence exacerbated the religious tensions in the empire. It was not until the reign of Sultan Abdul Hameed (1876-1909) that the foreign institutions were brought under the supervision of the state. The funding for the educational reforms came partly from the local communities and partly from the government. The local communities paid for buildings and books for the primary schools; the state helped with guidance on syllabus, oversight and examinations. At the secondary school and higher levels, the provinces and the central government shared the expenditures.

To further higher learning, Grand Vizier Mustafa Rashid Pasha established a Council of Knowledge in 1851. The Council arranged public lectures by eminent scholars and encouraged the translation of books from French, German and English into Turkish. In 1862, Grand Vizier Ali Pasha set up the Ottoman Society of Science, which published a Journal of Science and worked on conceptual issues relating to the development of a civil code to replace the Shariah. The University of Istanbul was established in 1870 with faculties of engineering, science, medicine, philosophy, law and religious studies. But it was closed in 1872 because of a lack of funding and was not reopened until 1900. It was during the same period that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan initiated the Aligarh movement in India and established Aligarh College (1875).

Thus it was a thousand years after Muslims established the first university at Al Azhar (969), the university system returned to Muslim lands via Europe. Those who had learned from the Muslims now had become their teachers and Islamic civilization, which had lit the torch of learning in Europe, was now borrowing back that light.

The establishment of a secular university increased the cleavage between the secularists and the ulema. Grand Viziers Ali and Fuad, as well as some Ottoman intellectuals in the empire, were keenly aware of the dangers in the developing antagonisms and worked to reduce them. Fuad established the Society for Islamic Studies in 1870, which offered extension courses in Islamic sciences as well as lectures on Shariah and Fiqh. Writers such as Ahmed Cevdat who had received their earlier training in a madrasah and had a keen respect for traditional education, attempted to bridge the gap. But such attempts were unsuccessful; the traditionalists lost the race, and the secularists co-opted the future of the empire.

Lack of sufficient funding precluded a far-reaching overhaul of the educational system. The empire was hard pressed for cash during much of the period of the tanzeemat, a situation that became acute as the Ottomans contracted huge debts to international bankers as a result of the Crimean War. In addition to the funds required for educational and administrative reforms, the modernizing of the armed forces and the huge bureaucracy required to administer the tanzeemat consumed additional resources.

The tax collection system, as a result, had to be streamlined and new sources of revenue had to be found. Taxes on land and sheep, jizya,

payments from tributary states and commercial levies were the principal sources of tax revenue in the old system. A tenth of the agricultural produce was collected as tax. Tax on sheep was proportional to the number of animals. Jizya was an obligatory tax on non-Muslim able-bodied men between the ages of 17 and 40, in return for which they were excused from serving in the armed forces. The residents of Istanbul and the principal cities were exempt from the agricultural tax and paid only the sales tax on consumer items so that the principal burden of taxation fell on the farmers. There were import and export duties; however, through the Capitulatory Agreements with the European powers, many of the items imported by foreign merchants were taxed at a preferential rate or not taxed at all. The Capitulations put the Ottoman merchants at a disadvantage and prevented the emergence of local industry that could compete with that of Europe.

Tax collection was inefficient. Local fiefs administered the agricultural and sheep taxes and pocketed some of the proceeds before forwarding the balance to the treasury. Many of the villages were no more than serfdoms where one or two families owned all the land. Tax collection in the cities was supervised by the trade guilds. Religious foundations, mosques and churches were exempt from taxation in return for which they were required to run the maktabas and maintain local roads and bridges. There were no checks and balances; responsibility and accountability were ill defined and the indirect tax collection system was abused at various levels.

The tanzimat sought to replace indirect tax collection with a centralized, direct tax collection system. By the Tax Act of 1840, taxes were no longer collected by the tax farmers but by professional tax collectors appointed from Istanbul and made responsible to the treasury department. Extensive surveys of land, property, farm animals, rental income and salaries were undertaken to determine the tax basis for each. The property surveys were supplemented with an accurate census so that recruitment to the army and jizya from non-Muslim males of military age could be assessed fairly. Documentation of each item was thorough. A documentation fee was initiated on all documents and became a major source of revenue. In addition to direct taxation, every able bodied man between the ages of 16 and 60 was required to work on roads, bridges and public works for four days a week. Merchants and artisans in the cities were assessed a profits tax. Goods moving from one city to another were subject to a road tax and those

consumed locally were taxed at the point of origin. Exports were taxed at the point of loading and imports at the point of off-loading. The Capitulatory Powers, however, resisted attempts to increase tariffs on certain imported goods, so that foreigners continued to enjoy unfair advantages in trade and commerce.

The reforms increased the tax revenues. But the increasing burdens of defense, centralized bureaucracy and foreign debt more than offset the increased revenue so that the budget deficit of the empire continued to increase. There were not enough trained tax collectors and the few available men were spread thin over large territories. The local fiefs and landlords took advantage of the relative inexperience of the new bureaucrats so that after an initial increase, tax revenues started to decline again. Consequently, the empire reinstated the tax farms and tried auctioning them off to the highest bidder. This only increased the burden on the farmers because the fiefs were interested in recovering their investment and enriching themselves, at the expense of the farmers, as rapidly as possible. The period of an auctioned tax farm was therefore increased to five years, with the stipulation that the tax collector was to help the farmers with seeds and crop cultivation. This was only partially successful; the farmers remained at the mercy of the local fiefs.

To increase the efficiency of administration and to assist in tax collection, the empire was divided into seven provinces or banats of approximately equal population and tax revenue. Districts within each province were divided into sanjaks. Each sanjak was administered by a muhassil whose authority and responsibility was clearly defined. Each sanjak was further divided into kazas. Such a division would correspond to the modern day division of provinces, districts and counties. To increase the participation of people in local self-government, each sanjak and kaza had an elected advisory council, consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims as well as the local kadi, police chief and tax collector. At the village level, a council of elders represented each millet. The representation was indirect. Only the local notables had any chance of getting elected; the poor had very little representation.

Since there were not enough bureaucrats to administer the tanzeemat, the role of the army in the administration was therefore increased. The provinces were put under the direct control of the field marshals or the

mushirs. The mushirs functioned with the help of local notables who assisted with tax collection in cooperation with the appointed tax collectors and scribes. The powers of the sanjak councils were increased. They could ask for information from the mushirs, send complaints to the grand vizier, review court decisions, discuss local problems and offer solutions. In addition, some public funds were channeled to the provincial councils and they were given the responsibility for repairing and maintaining roads, bridges and canals.

Funding dried up after the Crimean War of 1853-1856 and the Councils lost their effectiveness. As a result, in 1864, the powers of the provincial governors were increased. Each governor was made responsible for all administrative, judicial, fiscal, social and security issues. He supervised the tax collectors, gathered information and provided oversight for education. Tax collection was centralized. All revenues were shipped to Istanbul from where specific amounts were returned to each district for administrative expenses. Departments of taxation, accounting, documentation, administration, education and public affairs were set up to assist the governors. The directors of these departments were appointed from Istanbul and were responsible directly to the center. An elected council of six members, three Muslims and three non-Muslims, was assigned to each department. Increased local representation protected the people from undue taxation, fostered local initiative and improved education, roads, transportation and the security of the people.

Even the Sultan was not untouched by the tanzeemat. The Sultans curtailed the growth of their expenses and their expenses as a percentage of the overall budget decreased. They made themselves more accessible to the public, traveled abroad on diplomatic missions and went for Friday prayers at the Aya Sophia Mosque in an open carriage.

The tanzeemat transformed Istanbul into one of the finest cosmopolitan cities on the Eurasian landmass by 1865. In 1858, following a detailed study, a municipal commission was set up for the European section of the city. In 1864, the municipal administration was extended to the whole city. The city was divided into 14 districts, each district managed by a council of 8 to 12 members. The municipal administration had responsibility for buildings, sanitation, market place, communication, lighting, building codes, layout, public facilities, commercial and tourist places, public health,

orphanage and police functions. A budget was prepared for each district and accountability was assigned. These reforms came at the expense of the guilds and of the entrenched millet hierarchies. Despite the interference of European powers who were always ready to support the non-Muslim millets, the reforms were highly successful. In 1870, the same system of administration was extended to the other cities in the empire.

The tanzeemat brought in increasing secularization to the judicial process. The old judicial system was based on Hanafi Fiqh in which each religious group was given the privilege of maintaining its own millet courts. The tanzeemat sought to restrict the jurisdiction of the Shariah courts to civil disputes between Muslims and of millet courts to civil disputes among members of that millet, while creating mixed tribunals consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims when a dispute involved members of different religious groups. A uniform commercial code, along the lines of the French Commercial Code, was decreed. It established mixed tribunals consisting of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans and included representatives of European merchants. Court procedures were borrowed from the French and Italian penal systems.

By a decree of the Sultan, the life and property of all subjects was guaranteed. As confidence in the secular judicial processes increased, so did private and foreign investment in the empire. In 1856, the secular court system was expanded to the provincial and local levels. A court of appeals was set up to provide oversight of the lower courts. The promulgation of a uniform commercial code enabled the Ottomans to renegotiate certain provisions of the Capitulatory Agreements signed with France, Britain, Austria-Hungary and Russia and for the first time, foreign citizens were brought under the Ottoman judicial system.

Communications and industry benefited from the tanzeemat. The major cities were connected by a telegraph system making it possible for a centralized bureaucracy to maintain efficient control over the provinces. Improvements in the roads and the introduction of steam ship service between the principal ports speeded up postal deliveries. Railroads were opened up for foreign investment and over 3,000 miles of railroads were completed by 1876. New production facilities for the manufacture of army gear, including guns, ammunition, clothes and headgear were started with

state capital. Ottoman as well as foreign capital was invested in cloth manufacture, mining, oil extraction, rug manufacture and silk production.

Technology changes society. The printing press facilitated the growth of a vigorous media and the introduction of European ideas into the empire. Increased industrial employment coupled with a secular system of higher education produced a consumer-oriented middle class. The emerging secular elite challenged the traditional power structure of the ulema and the landed aristocracy. The ulema had long benefited from their monopoly of the educational and judicial systems. The introduction of secular education and a uniform commercial code after the pattern of the French commercial code eroded this monopoly. The power structure of the non-Muslim millets was similarly transformed. The Armenian Patriarch as well as the chief rabbi in Istanbul had to accept the oversight of elected councils dominated by laymen. The functions of the patriarchs and rabbis were confined to religious matters. The elected councils decided all other issues, such as taxation, education and community welfare. The religious establishment, both Muslim and non-Muslim, resented the reduction in their former power and privileges and their cooperation with the reforms was at best lukewarm.

The power of the Sultan, the religious establishment and the landed elite was reduced while the increasing power of the bureaucrats went unchecked. The increasing centralization of power produced a cadre of arrogant bureaucrats, cocky and self-assured that the direction they had charted for the empire was the correct one. This generated an intellectual backlash that sought to redress the erosion of the old institutions and to impose checks and balances on the bureaucrats. The men who led this movement were called the Young Ottomans who sought to restrain the tanzeemat bureaucrats through parliamentary democracy and a constitution. On the one hand they were impatient with the pace of the reforms; on the other, they wanted to transform yet retain the old institutions. They felt that the millet system had outlived its usefulness and they campaigned for equality of all Ottoman citizens under a single constitution, irrespective of their religion or nationality. Their efforts led to an indirectly elected parliament in 1876, but as we shall see, it was soon bogged down in procedural issues and was abandoned by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1879.

The reforms were taking place under the shadow of aggression from Russia, which had not given up its dream of capturing the Dardanelles, thus

providing an outlet for its navy to the Mediterranean. Russia had shown in the war of 1828 that it had the military capability to penetrate the Turkish heartland and reach Istanbul. The military weakness of the Ottomans brought it into the vortex of European colonial politics. Austria and Russia both coveted the Balkans. The French had their eyes on Algeria and North Africa. The British desired to control Egypt as a passageway to their Indian Empire. All of these powers agreed on a dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire but each had its own ideas about who would pick up the pieces.

The presence of a large number of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire provided the European powers ample opportunities to interfere in Ottoman affairs. In the 1850s, their conflicting interests led to a general war involving Russia, Britain, France and the Ottomans. The wrangling of the Christian minorities for privileges in Palestine provided the trigger. Since their conquest of Jerusalem in 1517, the Ottomans had tried to keep the peace between the various sects by a juggling act of balancing competing claims. Following the war of 1828-1829, the Russian Czar obtained the permission of the Sultan to repair some of the Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Jerusalem. The Patriarch of Jerusalem declared his autonomy from the Patriarch of Istanbul and placed himself under Russian protection. The growing Russian influence whetted the appetite of the French, who were accepted as protectors of the Catholic minority in Syria and Palestine by the Capitulatory Agreements. Emperor Napoleon III of France, trying to improve his standing with his subjects following his abrogation of the French Republic (1851), demanded from the Sultan similar privileges for the Catholics. The Sultan, trying to maintain a neutral position between the claims of the Russians and the French, acceded to the French requests. In turn, the Russians demanded greater privileges for themselves including an acceptance by Istanbul that Russia was the protector of all Eastern Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman Empire. These demands irked the Porte. Ottoman public opinion was outraged at what it considered was Russian infringement of Ottoman sovereignty.

The British, at first inclined to side with the Russians against France, saw that Russian ascendancy would jeopardize their interests in the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to the Capitulatory Agreements, the Ottoman Empire was a ready source of raw materials for British factories, as well as a good market for their products. British diplomacy now tilted against Russia. Encouraged



by Britain and by popular resentment at home against Russian demands, the Porte at first agreed to the Czar's demands and then rejected them. Enraged, the Czar threatened war unless Istanbul immediately capitulated. A conference in Vienna failed to produce a mutually acceptable solution; war ensued in July 1854 with an Ottoman advance into Romania and into the southern Caucasus. The Russians soon gained the upper hand on both fronts. A Turkish naval squadron sent into the Black Sea to destroy the Russian fleet fared no better. Alarmed that a Russian victory would leave the Czar in possession of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France declared war on Russia.

This was the beginning of the Crimean War in which Britain and France sought to contain the Russians by propping up the Ottomans against the Czar's war machine. British and French naval squadrons advanced through the Dardanelles and bombarded Russian fortifications in the Crimea. The port of Sevastopol soon became the focus of a major trial of strength between the Russians on the one hand and a combined British-French expeditionary force on the other. Meanwhile, to avoid having to fight a war on two fronts, the Russians handed over the territories of Romania to the Austrians. The siege of Sevastopol continued for more than a year (1854-1855). The Russians surrendered the port city only after a long and bitter fight. To the east, however, the Russian armies advanced through the Caucasus into eastern Anatolia, capturing Kars, Van and Erzurum and threatening Central Anatolia. A brutal war of attrition went on even as the contestants wrangled over terms of a ceasefire. Finally, by the Treaty of Paris (1856), the forces disengaged. The warring parties agreed to relinquish each other's territories. The autonomy of Romania and Serbia under Ottoman sovereignty was reaffirmed and the European powers declared themselves guarantors of the rights of the Christian inhabitants in the Balkans. The Czar obtained a concession as protector of the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem.

Although the Crimean War ended with the Ottomans nominally retaining their territories, in the long term it proved to be the beginning of the end of the empire. The war effort was enormously expensive in men and material. To meet the heavy war expenditures, the Ottomans took their first loan from European bankers in 1854. The terms of the loan were harsh; they carried discounts of up to 40%, plus exorbitant rates of interest. Each year, to

balance their budget, the Porte had to borrow additional funds from the Europeans. Despite the reforms of the *tanzimat* to increase revenues and the efforts of successive grand viziers to cut expenditures, the empire could not dig itself out of debt. It was about the same time that Egypt, the most important Muslim province of the empire, also contracted international debts to construct the Suez Canal. By 1875, both Cairo and Istanbul were up to their necks in debt.

The proportion of the budget earmarked for debt servicing continued to increase, so that by 1878, it consumed over 80% of all revenues! The Ottomans tried different methods to balance the budget, including printing paper money and borrowing internally from their own citizens. Such efforts generated inflation, further eroding the value of the Ottoman currency and making international debt payments more expensive. Most of the loans originated from bankers based in London. Britain had successfully put a noose around the Ottoman Empire without declaring war on it. The noose tightened every year. It was this bankrupt empire that Abdul Hamid II, the last of the great Sultans in Islamic history, inherited when he became the Sultan/Caliph in 1878.

The Ottoman Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century faced most of the issues that confront the world of Islam today: centralization versus decentralization, nationalism versus pan-Islamism, tradition versus modernism, Sultanate versus democracy, pluralism, education, organization, technological development, foreign domination and international debt. The Ottoman Empire made a valiant attempt to transform itself and meet these challenges. While honoring the autonomy of its Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish and Armenian subjects within the millet system, it sought to modernize its armed forces, administration, education, economy and legislative processes.

The reforms failed to prevent a collapse of the empire for five principal reasons. First, the need to defend themselves against military aggression forced the Ottomans into international debt from which they never recovered. Second, the reforms were imported from Europe and were forced from the top. Third, the ulema failed to provide intellectual leadership, reform education and evolve institutions that would lead the Muslims from the medieval to the modern age. Fourth, Russian aggression from the north and British and French political machinations from the

south, worked like a hammer and anvil to crush the empire. And fifth, the millet system, however benevolent it was from a Muslim perspective, was unacceptable to the large Christian minorities in the Balkans and Armenia. They resorted to increasing terrorism against Muslims and aided and abetted by the principal European powers, used every opportunity to destroy the empire.

## **Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Last of the Great Sultans**

Sultan Abdul Hamid II inherited an empire that was bankrupt. Beginning with the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Ottoman debt mounted steadily. The burden of keeping a large standing army and modernizing it in the face of perpetual foreign threats required continued borrowing, so that by 1878 the public debt stood at more than 13.5 billion kurush. The cost of servicing this enormous debt was more than 1.4 billion kurush, a sum equal to 70% of all revenues. The heavy debt burden cast a long shadow on all aspects of the Sultan's reign, including international relations, education, agriculture and political reform.

A militarily and economically weak Ottoman Empire was the object of European imperial ambitions. Russia had emerged as a major Eurasian power, having swallowed up the Turkoman territories of Central Asia and the Caucasus. The Russian czar desired open access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean to become a player in the great game of world domination. But the Ottoman Empire, sitting astride a wide arc extending from the Adriatic Sea to the borders of Persia, blocked this access. To achieve his aims and pressure the Ottomans into giving him concessions, the Czar used a combination of direct military threats and indirect pressure through his Serbian and Bulgar surrogates. France, after occupying Algeria, had her eyes on Morocco and Tunisia. The Italians wanted Libya. The empire of Austria-Hungary sought Bosnia-Herzegovina. The interests of Great Britain lay in

Egypt and in the control of access routes to her Indian Empire. Only Germany, which had emerged as the dominant power on the continent under Bismarck, preferred the status quo. But she too was willing to sacrifice Ottoman territorial integrity to preserve her interests. Realizing that a war between Russia and Austria-Hungary over their competing ambitions in the

Balkans would force him to take sides and shatter his domination of continental Europe, the Kaiser of Germany engineered an alliance between himself, the Emperor of Austria-Hungary and the Czar of Russia. This alliance was called the League of Three Emperors.

In the nationalistic mosaic of 19th century Europe, the Ottomans stood alone in their insistence on maintaining a multi-religious, multiethnic, multi-national state. But the all too apparent fissures in the empire, along national and religious lines were an invitation to foreign meddling. The European powers, using these religious and ethnic divisions as political opportunities, were determined to swallow up the Ottoman Empire. A bankrupt Ottoman state, dubbed the “sick man of Europe” by the Czar, could not defend itself and was constantly looking for allies who would guarantee its territorial integrity. Against these heavy odds, Sultan Abdul Hamid waged a valiant struggle to rescue the empire, if he could, or at least salvage its core Islamic component if he lost the predominantly Christian provinces. In this pursuit, he substituted diplomacy for war, playing off the ambitions of one European power against another, compromising where he could and buying time to reform the institutions that held the empire together. To a large extent, he succeeded. But he had arrived on the stage of history too late. His autocratic style won him the displeasure of his people. And the very success of his reforms set in motion powerful forces that ultimately toppled him from power and led the empire to its demise.

Abdul Hamid II (1842-1918) was the son of Sultan Abdul Majid (1823-1861) and a Circassian mother. As a child, he received an education worthy of a caliph and Sultan. His tutors included some of the leading ulema and shaykhs of Istanbul. He was well versed in the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and in the Hanafi school of Fiqh.

He was trained in sufi practices as well, particularly the Naqshbandi and Helveti orders, which had a significant following in the empire. As a prince, he sought out bankers, diplomats and leaders of the Tanzeemat reforms, discussing with them issues that affected the empire and in the process, he acquired a broad understanding of economics, administration and international politics. As a young man, he was retiring in nature, avoiding the frivolities that so often consumed other princes. He was fastidious in prayer, reclusive by nature, pious in his religious observances and charitable in disposition. These qualities were to serve him well later, endearing him

to the Muslim masses worldwide and enabling him, for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to provide a semblance of political focus for the global Islamic community.

Immediately after his accession, Sultan Abdul Hamid came up against the Russian ambitions in the Balkans. The Czar, declaring himself the champion of all Slavs and the protector of the Eastern Orthodox Church, encouraged an insurrection in Serbia. The Ottomans successfully put down the uprising in 1876. Realizing that active intervention on behalf of the Serbs carried a risk of war with Austria-Hungary, the Czar shifted his focus to Bulgaria. The excuse for intervention was the supposed mistreatment of Christian Bulgars by the Ottomans, while the objective was the creation of a greater Bulgaria, under Russian domination, extending south from the Danube all the way to the Aegean Sea. The western shores of the Black Sea would then be under Russian domination and the armed forces of the Czar would have access to the Mediterranean. However, this plan too required the cooperation of the Austrians. During the Crimean War of 1853-1856, Austrian troops had occupied Romania with the connivance of the Russians. For Russian troops to reach Bulgaria, they would have to cross Romania, now under Hapsburg domination. Fearing that overlapping Russian and Austrian ambitions might lead to war, Bismarck of Germany proposed a division of the Ottoman Empire, with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia going to the Hapsburgs while Romania and an enlarged Bulgaria would come under Russian domination. The British, fearing that a further expansion of Austrian and Russian influence towards the Mediterranean would threaten their own interests, opposed this plan and proposed instead a conference in Istanbul to reconcile the competing ambitions of the powers.

At the Istanbul Conference, held in November 1876, Britain proposed a series of “reforms” which, while mollifying Russia and Austria-Hungary, would keep them out of the Mediterranean. Bulgaria, while nominally staying within the Ottoman Empire, was to be partitioned into two provinces. The governor of each province would be a Christian, appointed with the concurrence of the European powers. Except for tobacco and customs duty, all revenues would go to the provincial government. The judicial system would be overhauled and new judges appointed with the approval of the powers. Separate police forces would be created for Christian and Muslim villages. Ottoman troops would be withdrawn from

the province and their place taken up by Belgian troops. Britain proposed similar “reforms” for Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Austria-Hungary would provide oversight for their implementation. These proposals, if implemented, would have meant virtual independence for both Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina and would have legalized the intervention of the powers into the affairs of these two important Ottoman provinces.

The Bulgarian issue had emerged as an important one due to a Russian engineered insurrection in that province. The Bulgars captured a large number of towns and slaughtered thousands of Turks. Unable to control the uprising, the Ottoman governor of the province, Nadim Pasha, organized local militias to protect Muslim villages. Massacres and counter massacres followed. The Europeans, always quick to point fingers when Christians were killed, while closing their eyes to massacres of Muslims, played up the Christian casualties. In the British parliament, Gladstone, in a rousing speech, referred to the Ottomans as “the unspeakable Turks” and demanded a concerted European action to curb the Ottomans. The Czar threatened military action unless sweeping reforms were implemented in the province under Russian supervision.

To preempt the European powers, the Ottoman Porte (the vizierate) pushed for the promulgation of a constitution that would remove any pretext for foreign intervention. At the request of Midhat Pasha, Chairman of the Council of State, Sultan Abdul Hamid authorized the formation of a Constitution Commission. Working round the clock, the Commission produced a constitution, which embodied far-reaching reforms and touched on every aspect of Ottoman administration.

While retaining the ultimate authority of the Caliph/Sultan and his privileges to mint coins and have his name invoked in the Friday khutba, the reforms guaranteed individual liberty to all citizens, equality before the law, freedom of worship, sanctity of privacy, the right to property and protection from arbitrary arrest. There was to be no discrimination in government jobs and the civil service was to be a meritocracy. A two-tier Parliament was established after the pattern of the liberal European monarchies with a lower house, majlis e mebusan, consisting of elected delegates and a smaller upper house, majlis e ayan, whose members were appointed by the Sultan. Freedom of expression within the Parliament and immunity from prosecution of the deputies for their views was guaranteed.

The Sultan appointed the grand vizier and the council of ministers. The grand vizier, as the chief executive officer of the empire, presided over the meetings of the ministers and coordinated their activities. In times of emergency, such as those involving the security of the state, he could issue emergency orders. The Parliament had the authority to approve annual budgets, provide oversight for the expenditures of the various ministries and enforce fiscal discipline. It was empowered to ratify legislation initiated by the Council of Ministers. If ratified, the legislation was then submitted to the Sultan, through the grand vizier, for his final approval. The Council of State, which had come into existence during the earlier phases of the *tanzimat*, was retained to provide assistance to the parliament and the Council of Ministers in the drafting, preparation and documentation of legislation.

The deputies of the lower house were elected and had a term of four years, whereas those of the upper house were appointed by the Sultan for life. Except in matters of personal law, wherein the Shariah and millet courts were retained, the jurisdiction of secular courts was expanded to cover all aspects of life. Representative councils were retained at the provincial, district and county levels to provide inputs on education, agriculture, trade and commerce. A Supreme Court was set up with the authority to try wayward judges, members of the parliament and ministers. Islam remained the state religion but freedom of worship was guaranteed to all millets. All citizens were henceforth to be considered Ottomans, irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation. Each millet was free to elect its own representative council and organize its internal affairs. Thus a major move was made towards parliamentary democracy that provided a voice to the people, guaranteed individual rights and took significant steps towards mollifying European concerns about the rights of Christians in the empire. To implement the reforms, Sultan Abdul Hamid appointed Midhat Pasha, who had served as chairman of the Council of State and the principal architect of the reforms, as the grand vizier.

The European powers were not interested in reforming the Ottoman Empire. The disaffection of the Christians was merely a pretext for intervention into Ottoman affairs. Russia, in particular, was not satisfied with anything less than an outlet to the Mediterranean. At the Istanbul Conference, the European powers backed Russian demands to divide up



Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina and administer them under European oversight. Sultan Abdul Hamid knew the military vulnerability of the empire and sought to avoid war. In addition to promulgating the constitution in December 1876, he forwarded his own plan to appoint an inquiry commission, with international participation, to look into charges of atrocities in Bulgaria and punish those responsible. Midhat Pasha, who was serving as the principal Ottoman negotiator with the powers, did not present these plans at the conference, but instead submitted the European demands to the Ottoman parliament. The newly elected representatives were furious at this affront to Ottoman sovereignty and rejected the demands. The Istanbul Conference broke up in disarray.

Even as negotiations were underway at the Istanbul Conference (December 1876—January 1877) and the Ottoman parliament met (March 1877) to implement the reforms, the Russians made active preparations for war. The Czar bought the neutrality of the Austria-Hungary Empire by promising them the principality of Bosnia-Herzegovina and hegemony over Serbia. The Austrian military contingent stationed in Romania since 1854 was withdrawn, clearing the way for a Russian advance upon Istanbul through Romania and Bulgaria. The British too, signaled their neutrality in the event of a Russian-Turkish war by declaring that they would not interfere as long as the status of the Straits or Istanbul was unaltered. Germany, whose principal preoccupation was avoidance of war between Austria and Russia, went along with Austrian neutrality. Thus the road was cleared for the Czar's army to invade the territories of its neighbor to the south.

The Russians began the war in May 1877 with an attack on the Ottoman eastern provinces. The following month, in June 1877, they opened a second front in the west across the Danube River. The Russian invasion was in clear violation of the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1856 at the conclusion of the Crimean War, by which the European powers had collectively guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But this was the age of colonialism. Each treaty that the Europeans signed with the Ottomans was but a ruse to subvert and occupy additional Ottoman territory.

The Russian objective in the east was a rapid drive on the city of Erzurum, from where they could cut a swath through southern Anatolia and Syria to the Mediterranean, isolating the Turkish heartland. In the west, the

goal was a rapid drive on Istanbul through Romania and Bulgaria to force the Turks to capitulate before the European powers changed their mind about their professed neutrality. The Ottomans, even though they had spent large sums on armaments since the Crimean War, were hampered by a lack of trained officers. The Czar, through skillful propaganda as the self-proclaimed protector of the Eastern Orthodox Church, took full advantage of the disaffection of the large Christian population in the Balkans. In the eastern sector too, he incited the hitherto peaceful Armenians to harass the Ottoman armies.

Aided by local Christians, the initial advance of the Russian armies was swift. Ardahan fell in May 1877; the Ottomans lost a sizable number of men and material. On the western front, the garrison town of Sistova fell in June. Advance contingents of Russian troops crossed the Shipka Pass, captured Sofia and Nicopolis and threatened Erdirne.

Large-scale massacres of Muslim peasants followed each of the Russian conquests. The Russians distributed guns and ammunition captured from the retreating Ottomans to the local Christians who turned on their Muslim neighbors. Village after village witnessed horror scenes of mass killings. The haggard survivors of the slaughter streamed towards Istanbul. Over 250,000 refugees entered Istanbul and Anatolia in the first three months of the Russian campaigns. Over the next two years (1877-1879), this number doubled, imposing a tremendous burden on Ottoman resources. This was the first of the large-scale massacres of Balkan Muslims, which continued on and off for more than a hundred years, culminating in the Serbian massacres of Bosnians in 1990-1992.

These early reverses shocked the Ottomans. The Porte appealed to the European powers under terms of the Paris Treaty to pressure the Russians to withdraw. The replies from Austria and Germany were vague. The British cabinet issued equally vague statements and did nothing to deter the Czar.

Meanwhile, the Russian aggression had to be met. The Sultan's response was characteristically Islamic. He took out the Prophet's mantle from the Topkapi palace, declared the resistance to Russia a jihad, proclaimed himself a ghazi after the example of the early Ottoman Sultans and appealed to Muslims worldwide for support. This pattern of appeal to the global Muslim community was to be repeated, time and again, during the reign of Abdul Hamid.

The response from the Turks, Arabs and Albanians was overwhelming. Men came out in droves to join the armed forces. Women offered their jewelry to finance the war effort. The Sultan selected the best available generals for the defensive campaigns. Ahmed Muhtar Pasha was appointed the commander of the eastern forces. Muhtar reorganized his troops, dispersed over the eastern districts, and stopped the Russian advance at Kars. On the western front, Sulaiman Pasha was appointed the commander, while the defense of the Bulgarian passes was delegated to Osman Pasha. Sulaiman brought reinforcements by sea to Alexandropolis, swiftly moved north through western Bulgaria and drove the Russians back across the Shipka Pass. The Russians regrouped and with a large horde of over 100,000 men, backed by the main Romanian regiments, made a thrust at the strategic town of Plevna. Meanwhile, Osman Pasha had reinforced the town, built a fortress, dug trenches and had brought in heavy guns to defend the surrounding terrain. From this bastion, he held off repeated assaults by the combined Russian-Romanian forces, earning for himself and his men the admiration of Europeans and the gratitude of his fellow countrymen. The Sultan, in recognition of this heroic defense, conferred the title of ghazi on Osman Pasha.

The front lines were stable throughout the summer of 1877. But with the passage of time, the weight of the vast Russian Empire and of their Christian sympathizers within the Ottoman Empire, began to be felt. By October 1877, the Ottoman lines began to crack. On the eastern front, Kars fell in November, although Mohtar Pasha was able to withdraw the bulk of his forces to Erzurum. Azerbaijan, Armenia and eastern Anatolia were in Russian hands. On the western front, the heroic defense of Plevna continued. The Russians surrounded the garrison and cut off the supplies of food, hoping to starve the defenders into submission. Despite the lack of food and the harsh winter, the Ottomans held on, hoping for fresh reinforcements from Istanbul. But the Russian juggernaut tightened. In December, Osman Pasha ordered his troops to fight their way out. In hand to hand combat, over 30,000 Ottoman troops died. Thousands more perished in the icy mountainous terrain. Plevna surrendered. Showing no mercy, the Russians and their Romanian comrades butchered the survivors in the city.

With the fall of Plevna, the bulk of the Russian army was free to move southward. Sofia and Erdirne fell in rapid succession. An advanced detachment under Grand Duke Nicholas reached the outskirts of Istanbul. The capital city, already swollen with hundreds of thousands of refugees, braced for an assault. The rapid advance of the Russian armies towards Istanbul caused an alarm in Vienna and London. Should the Russians occupy the empire, the Ottomans would default on their loans to the European bankers. Panic set in in the London financial markets. Realizing the threat to its financial interests and its imperial interests in Egypt, the British cabinet issued a stern warning to the Russians not to advance on the Straits. A humbled Sultan Abdul Hamid wrote to Queen Victoria asking her to arrange an armistice and requesting the British fleet to anchor in Istanbul as insurance against Russian occupation. The Czar, exhausted from his campaigns against the Turks, was in no position to wage a wider war with Britain and Austria-Hungary. He wrote to the Sultan assuring him that the Russians had no intention of occupying Istanbul.

In March 1878, the Russians and the Ottomans signed a Treaty at San Stefano, a small village located on the outskirts of Istanbul. By its terms, the Ottomans ceded the districts of Kars, Ardahan and Batum in the east to Russia. The Straits would be open to Russian shipping. The independence of Romania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria was acknowledged. Montenegro and Serbia were expanded to include large portions of Bosnia and Albania. Bulgaria was rewarded with all of eastern Rumelia and northern Thrace and its territories grew more than three fold to extend from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea. The dream of the czars to create a Balkan political landscape dominated by Russia was fulfilled. The Ottomans agreed to pay a war indemnity of 24 billion kurush to the Czar over a period of 100 years. Summarily, the terms were nothing short of surrender by the Ottomans.

The Treaty of San Stefano was unacceptable to the other European powers. Britain and France were opposed to a Russian dominated Bulgaria extending to the Aegean Sea. Austria objected to Russian influence over Serbia and Montenegro. Bismarck of Germany, allied with Austria and Russia in the League of the Three Emperors, realized that unless rapid steps were taken to defuse the situation, war might erupt between his two allies. Therefore, he agreed to convene a conference of the principal powers in

Berlin, in which all the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano would be renegotiated. The Treaty of Berlin, which concluded in July 1878, divided Bulgaria into three parts. The northern part would be autonomous under Russian guidance but would pay an annual tribute to the Sultan. The second part, east Rumelia, would be under Ottoman control but with a mixed Muslim-Christian administration supervised by the powers. The southern part, consisting of Thrace and southern Rumelia were returned to direct Ottoman administration. Bosnia-Herzegovina was placed under Austrian control. The independence of Montenegro and Serbia was affirmed. As a “precaution” against further Russian military pressure against the Porte, Britain occupied Cyprus on the pretext that it could rapidly respond to any future threats by the Czar. Ottoman war indemnities to Russia were reduced to 350,000 kurush annually for 100 years. The Conference of Berlin thus sealed the fate of the Ottoman Empire in Europe with only a rump swath of territory left to link Istanbul with Albania. To the east, the Ottomans lost several districts in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Perhaps, as significantly, the cost of the war exhausted them financially. The war indemnities to Russia added to the already crippling debt payments to European bankers.

The Russian invasion of 1877-1878 and its aftermath had a profound impact on the young Sultan. Abdul Hamid realized the futility of holding on to European territories in which the Christians were a majority. His Christian vassals had rebelled and had aided the Russians, despite the reforms instituted under the *tanzimat* and despite the representation given to them in the new Ottoman parliament. He was deeply disappointed with the principal powers which had let down the Ottomans despite their treaty obligations. It became apparent that the principal powers desired nothing less than total dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. These fears were soon confirmed by French moves on North Africa and British moves on Egypt. The war had brought hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees into Istanbul, fleeing the mass slaughter that followed the Russian advance. Having lost everything in their flight, these refugees were extremely bitter towards their Christian neighbors. These factors made the Sultan turn his back on Europe and reorient his focus towards the Muslim Middle East.

The question before the Sultan was this: How could the Caliph disengage from Christian Europe without humiliation so that the Muslim core of the Empire was preserved and provided a nucleus for future Islamic political

renewal? This was a paradigm shift for the Ottomans who had carved out their European empire (1350-1453) long before their thrust into Syria, Egypt and Arabia (1517).

The Sultan's tilt towards the Islamic Middle East contrasted with the main thrust of the *tanzeemat* towards multi-religious Ottomanism and introduced an element of tension in the Ottoman governing circles which persisted well into the twentieth century. Ottomanism was also challenged by the rising tide of nationalism in the Balkans. This introduced a second element of tension in the empire. A third element of tension was traditionalism versus modernism. There were those in the empire, the *ulema* and the *kadis*, who desired a slow evolution of society and its institutions from its Islamic past. And there were those among the more secular men of the *tanzeemat* and the non-Muslim *millet*s, who desired a more secular approach. These tensions were exacerbated by the continuing imperial ambitions of the European powers.

To save what was left of the empire, the Sultan desired a faster modernization of the empire using a centralized approach. The men of the *tanzeemat*, too, desired reforms, but despite the experience of the war and the letdown by the Christians in the Balkans, they persisted in the belief that constitutionalism was the best way to bring about change. The two approaches were bound to clash, and they did. And in its aftermath, the empire first moved towards autocracy and pan-Islamism and then swung back towards parliamentary rule and secularism.

The stipulations of the Berlin Treaty and the intentions of the principal powers to respect Ottoman sovereignty were soon tested in Tunisia. The North African territories around Tunis were long under the control of local *beys*. The Ottomans had maintained nominal control over the *beys* through a provincial governor and a military garrison. The French, after consolidating their hold on Algeria (1830), extended their ambitions to Tunisia. The first moves were made on the economic and financial fronts. The free spending *beys* borrowed heavily from the French bankers and soon found themselves in so much debt that they could not make payments on the interest and principal. To extract the debt payments, the European powers established the Tunisian Debt Commission in 1869 and assumed control of its public services as well as raw materials. In 1881, the British offered Tunisia to the French to buy their acquiescence to British

occupation of Cyprus. Realizing that a refusal would mean Tunisia would be offered to the Italians, the French army moved into Tunis and declared it a French “protectorate”. Sultan Abdul Hamid protested under terms of the Berlin Treaty, but in realpolitik only the voice of the powerful speaks. The European powers turned a deaf ear to the Sultan’s pleas.

More serious was the British occupation of Egypt, the jewel of the Ottoman Empire. By 1878, the focus of global history had shifted from the Mediterranean to Asia. The interests of Great Britain were now focused on its Indian Empire. British interests lay in controlling the sea lanes to India. That meant control of Egypt, which was still nominally an Ottoman province. Egypt was the cultural center of the empire and was, until its occupation by Sultan Selim I, the seat of the Caliphate. It was the most populous of the Ottoman provinces and the gateway to Africa.

Economic penetration was the means for British entry into Egypt, as it was for the French occupation of Tunisia. The Khedives of Egypt, Sait and Ismail, had contracted huge loans at enormous discounts, first to build the Suez Canal, then to support their own lavish life styles. By 1875, the debt had increased to 100 million British pounds and it required more than two thirds of all Egyptian revenues to keep the debts serviced. The financial condition of Egypt was thus a mirror image of that of the Ottoman Empire. When the Egyptians defaulted in their debt payments, the European powers formed the Egyptian Debt Commission with the authority to confiscate specific revenues. To ensure compliance, the powers imposed an Armenian nationalist as the prime minister of Egypt, while an Englishman became the finance minister and a Frenchman, the minister of public works.

The stipulations of the Egyptian Debt Commission meant the effective surrender of Egyptian sovereignty to the Europeans, which caused a public uproar. Riding on popular resentment, a group of Egyptian army officers forced the Khedive to remove the foreigners in the ministry and appoint Egyptians instead. When the Khedive dismissed the foreigners, the British and French, in consortium, demanded that

Khedive Ismail be replaced by his son Tawfiq who was more compliant and more willing to accept the British-French terms. However, since Egypt was technically an Ottoman province, the dismissal of a Khedive still required the consent of the Sultan in Istanbul. Sultan Abdul Hamid at first

vacillated, but he had no choice; Ismail was dismissed and Tawfiq was appointed in his place.

The Sultan sent a delegation to Cairo to discuss and resolve the financial issues with the European powers. While negotiations were going on, a combined armada of British and French navies appeared off the coast of Alexandria to put pressure on the negotiators. This was like pouring oil on a fire. Egyptian nationalist sentiment flared up and mob violence claimed the lives of several foreigners. This was the pretext the British were waiting for. Using the excuse of protecting European lives, the British navy bombarded the undefended city of Alexandria, killing several hundred people. The French, who had initially demanded military action against Egypt, became concerned that a combined assault would only propel Britain into a dominant position in Egypt and pulled out of the alliance. Undaunted, a British force landed in Alexandria and after occupying the city, moved on Cairo. On September 3, 1882, the nationalist Egyptian forces met the invaders at the battle of Tel el Kabir but were defeated. Four days later the British army was in Cairo.

The loss of Tunisia to France and of Egypt to Britain meant that the Ottoman Empire was now an Asian entity consisting of its Anatolian heartland and the Arab provinces of Syria, Iraq and Arabia. The war with Russia and the loss of Egypt and Tunisia had cost the Empire more than 60% of its population. There was a large influx of Muslim refugees from the Balkans. These refugees, having lost everything they had, were extremely hostile to the Christians and were determined to continue their struggle against Russia.

The suffering of the Balkan Muslims elicited sympathy among Muslims elsewhere in the empire and was the first reason for pushing popular opinion in the direction of Islamic solidarity. A second reason for increasing pan-Islamic tendencies was the early upbringing of the Sultan himself. As a young man Sultan Abdul Hamid was trained by the leading ulema and shaykhs of the time. He was a pious man who avoided frivolities, was austere, kept his prayers and observed the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah. By instinct and by training, the Sultan was disposed to seek closer ties with the Muslim world.

The third was an upsurge of revivalist feeling among the Muslims worldwide, expressed most fervently by the Mahdi of the Sudan (d.1884).



The Tijaniya movement in the Maghrib and the Sanusiya movement in Libya increased religious fervor amongst the Muslims of North Africa. In Afghanistan and Central Asia, the rhetoric of Jamaluddin Afghani had aroused pan-Islamic passions. In the Caucasus, resistance to Russian aggression was led by the Naqshbandi sufi tareeqa. With the arrest of Shaykh Shamayl (1854), the movement had gone underground but antipathy towards Russian rule continued.

A fourth reason was popular resentment at the economic exploitation of the empire through public debt and the Capitulations. The public debt, incurred at enormous discounts, crippled the Ottomans, consuming at times as much as 80% of all revenues. The Capitulations were used to obtain favorable trading terms for mass produced European goods. The young and undercapitalized Ottoman industries could not compete with the European products, so the empire stayed primarily a supplier of raw materials to Europe while consuming goods manufactured in Western Europe and America.

Lastly, with the advance of colonialism, vast areas of the Islamic world had come under European domination. France in North Africa, Russia in Central Asia, Britain in India and Austria-Hungary in Bosnia had large Muslim populations under their rule. These powers were as vulnerable with respect to their Muslim subjects as were the Ottomans with respect to their Christian subjects. The Ottoman Sultan was also the Caliph of Islam. He occupied a position in the Islamic religious-political space similar to that of the Pope in Rome with respect to Roman Catholics. The prestige of this position could be used to pressure the Christian European powers and make them take their hands off the only remaining independent Islamic state.

Conviction, hardened by realpolitik, impelled the Sultan to don the mantle of caliph with unapologetic openness. Abdul Hamid made a concerted effort to cultivate close relationships with Muslims not just in the empire but in Muslim India and Central Asia as well. He insisted on exercising his privilege, as caliph, of appointing the principal religious dignitaries in the Balkans. Writers like Namuk Kamal emphasized the Islamic origins of the empire and the contributions that the Turks had made to the continuing unfolding of Islamic civilization. The Sultan made it a point to go for Friday congregational prayers at the Aya Sophia in an open carriage so that the public would see him. Ramadan, the month of fasting,

became a special month of celebration. Each evening, before breaking the fast at sunset, the Sultan sat on a brocade chair in the hall of audience. Lining the hall on either side were rows of shaykhs, ulema and visiting dignitaries. The Sultan made it a point to invite some commoners to join him for the breaking of the fast so as to establish religious rapport with the masses.

The European powers viewed these moves with suspicion but were powerless to stop them. Implied in this assertive religious posture was the threat that any further moves against the domains of the caliph might result in a worldwide uprising of Muslims against their colonial masters. Wherever there was the slightest injury to Muslims, whether it was in Russia, British India, or French Africa, the Sultan sent a note of protest to the concerned power, thereby earning the respect and religious loyalty of Muslims worldwide. The British were particularly concerned about the huge number of Muslims in India and made their own propaganda efforts to portray themselves as friends and protectors of the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan welcomed Muslim dignitaries from all over the world into his palace where they were received with the honor and prestige reserved for heads of state. One of the principal dignitaries so received was Jamaluddin Afghani, a reformer from Afghanistan, who traveled throughout the Muslim world to forge political and cultural unity among Muslims. Religious fervor rose and the Sultan won the support of the ulema worldwide and established his legitimacy in the eyes of a majority of his subjects and also of a large number of Muslims globally. Muslims around the world looked to him for guidance in matters ranging from religious observances to the wearing of the fez.

The benefit of this assertive religious posture was that it kept the European powers off balance for more than a quarter century. The empire was at relative peace. The European powers, instead of seeking military occupation and colonial rule, were content to compete with each other for economic benefits, raw materials and markets. The price paid for this pan-Islamic tilt was that it took away whatever pretence the empire had as a multi-religious state. The disaffection of the Christian minorities grew, even as the reforms of the *tanzeemat* gathered momentum, providing equal opportunities for the *millets*.

Sultan Abdul Hamid was convinced that the only way to modernize the empire was through a centralized structure directed by his own person. This conviction was reinforced by the events of the first two years of his reign. He was deeply disappointed by Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha, widely credited as the father of the Ottoman Parliament, over his handling of negotiations at the Istanbul Conference of 1876. Midhat's own experience with the European powers had led him to take a hard stand at the Conference against the better counsel of the Sultan in favor of continued negotiations and compromise. The breakdown of the Conference led to the Russian invasion and a humiliating defeat. In addition, the politicians in the Parliament were more interested in enhancing their own political careers than finding solutions to the pressing issues facing the empire. The Christian nationalists used the floor of the Parliament as a platform to air their own demands for autonomy for their regions, or independence. In January 1878, with the Russian army approaching Istanbul, the Sultan sought the counsel of the Parliament to invite the British fleet into Istanbul harbor as a precautionary deterrent to a Russian occupation of the capital. Instead of counsel, the Sultan got lectures from petty citizens about the conduct of the war. A disillusioned Sultan lost his faith in the integrity of the bureaucrats and concluded that the empire was not yet ready for parliamentary democracy, that the best chance for a survival of the empire was through a centralized structure directed by himself. In February 1878, he dissolved the Parliament in accordance with provisions of the Constitution and directly assumed all powers.

What emerged in place of parliamentary rule was a highly centralized structure centered on the palace. The Sultan was the focus of authority and power. The centralization of power required that there be intermediaries between himself and the bureaucrats. The Sultan drew upon a model that had evolved in the earlier Islamic empires. Just as earlier caliphs had used hajibs to distance themselves from the ammah, so did Sultan Abdul Hamid use the mabayeen (intermediaries) to convey his wishes to the civil servants. Mabayeen means in between. This was the equivalent of the hajibs who had, in earlier centuries, separated the caliphs and Sultans from the ammah, the common folk.

The principal mabayeen and the chief of staff of the Sultan's staff, was called mabayeen mushiri. Between 1878 and 1897 this post was held by

Ghazi Osman Pasha, who had distinguished himself at the battle of Plevna (1877) and had earned the respect and confidence of the Sultan. He was a distinguished general. Ghazi Osman Pasha was a principal influence on the Sultan in matters relating to the army and foreign affairs. The mabayeen mushiri chaired the Privy Council, consisting of retired army officers and high-ranking bureaucrats, who provided advice to the Sultan on important matters. Next in closeness to the Sultan was the katip or the scribe who communicated the Sultan's commands to the bureaucrats and influenced the Sultan through his involvement in the communication process. The harem had its own influence on the Sultan through the chief eunuch or the agha. These three positions were the principal mabayeen between the Sultan and the outside world.

Abdul Hamid kept a close watch on all of his appointees, as well as on the extensive bureaucracy in the state, through an efficient system of police and spy network. The police functions were centralized and the department not only had the authority to maintain law and order, but to conduct surveillance on travelers, the press and writers. The Sultan, to keep himself informed of the minutest happenings in the empire, entrusted the Police Ministry only to his most trusted confidants. In addition, various advisors served him in matters of personal finance and foreign affairs.

The executive, legislative and judiciary functions were combined in the office of the grand vizier. The grand vizier was responsible for coordinating the affairs of state and of the work of the ministries. The grand vizier presided over ministerial meetings and chaired the important commissions established by the Sultan such as the commission on refugees. Among the important ministries were the Ministry of Internal affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the War Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Awqaf and the Ministry of Public Works. The legislative arm of the state, the Council of State, worked through the grand vizier, as did the Ministry of Justice, which provided oversight for the secular courts. One of the most successful of the grand viziers during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid was Mehmet Sait Pasha. He served in that capacity seven times between 1878 and 1909 and was twice called upon by the Young Turks to assume the position of the chief executive after Abdul Hamid was deposed.

The Shaykh ul Islam, as the chief religious functionary of the state, had oversight authority over mosques, madrasas, orphanages and religious publications. He interpreted the Shariah and ensured that its dictates were implemented in the Shariah courts. The shaykh, along with the grand vizier, the khedive of Egypt and the prince of Bulgaria formed the highest echelon of functionaries at the court of the Sultan.

The modernization programs sought by Abdul Hamid required sufficient funds for their implementation. The Sultan was hamstrung by the enormous accumulated debt that he had inherited. In 1876, the foreign debt alone stood at over 12 billion kurush. The Russian-Turkish war of 1876-1878 and its aftermath added another 4 billion kurush to this enormous burden. Together with unpaid interest, the total foreign debt stood at 23 billion kurush. In addition, the internal debt stood at another four billion kurush. Interest payments alone consumed more than 80% of the budget.

There was a real possibility that the Ottomans would succumb to this debt burden just as had Egypt and Tunisia. Sultan Abdul Hamid's first priority was to renegotiate the loans in conjunction with much needed economic reforms. Through negotiations, the total foreign debt was reduced from 23 billion to 12 billion kurush. The interest payments were negotiated down to about 20% of the budget. In return, specific revenues from tobacco, spirits, silk, salt, document fees and tributes from Bulgaria, Montenegro, Cyprus and Greece were turned over a Public Debt Commission consisting of representatives from the principal European powers and Ottoman functionaries.

To compensate for the lost revenues, the Sultan embarked upon a wide range of economic reforms. He instituted a budgetary process and established an audit department. The department heads were encouraged to trim their budgets. The Sultan removed his personal expenses from the budget and met them through his own resources. The privy purses of the princes were reduced. To increase revenues, agriculture and industrialization were encouraged. An agricultural bank was established to provide low interest loans to farmers. Surplus from the bank was used to finance education, to meet extraordinary budget requirements such as refugee resettlement and to pay for modernization of the armed forces. Foreign investment was encouraged for building railroads, telegraph lines and building silk, tobacco and fabric processing factories. The Hijaz

railroad, linking Damascus with Madina, was built entirely with domestic funds and contributions from Muslims worldwide, facilitating the movement of pilgrims from the eastern Mediterranean regions to Mecca and Madina. The net result of these reforms was that the Sultan succeeded in holding debt payments to about 7% of the budget while increasing revenues by almost 40% between 1878 and 1908, the last year of his reign. A side benefit of industrialization was that the European powers were deflected from seeking political military hegemony over the Ottomans to economic competition for mutual benefit.

The needs of the armed forces, and a civilian bureaucracy required to administer the vast empire, demanded an efficient, trained work force. Sultan Abdul Hamid knew that the Ottomans could not catch up with the West unless the educational system was reformed and expanded. Education was therefore given the highest priority. The Sultan saw to it that the education reforms that were initiated during the *tanzeemat* were completed during his reign. Since the debt burden was overwhelming, the Sultan invested from his personal resources to upgrade the standards of education in the Muslim religious schools, expanding their syllabus to include instruction in physics and mathematics. The millet schools as well as the missionary schools run by foreigners witnessed a similar increase in attendance. A surtax of 39% on agricultural produce was imposed, with two thirds of the revenues so generated earmarked for agricultural improvements and the remaining one-third for public education. Enrollment in the army *Rushdiye* schools was greatly expanded. The army took the lead in improving technical education. With a better cadre of students available, the War Academy, the Army Engineering School, the Army Medical School and the Merchant Marine School embarked on a program of modernization. Army instructors from Germany and agricultural instructors from France were brought in to upgrade the faculty. Enrollment in the technical schools increased four fold. The University of Istanbul was reopened in 1900 with the faculties of Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Religion and Social Sciences. Performance-based examinations replaced the old system of favoritism for admission to the technical schools and the university. The Sultan's educational reforms opened the doors to children of the less affluent classes giving them an opportunity to compete for the higher posts in civil service and the army. Predictably, the rise of an educated class which sprang from the lower ranks of society gave rise to demands for

increased political participation and ultimately led to the Young Turk revolution and the overthrow of the Sultan himself (1909).

The greatest tribute to Sultan Abdul Hamid is that even today many Muslims around the world invoke his name with nostalgia for a bygone era when a venerated caliph provided a semblance of political focus for the global Islamic community and gave it a sense of universal brotherhood. Muslims as far away as India and Nigeria looked to him for guidance in matters small and large. His office radiated religious, political, cultural and social influence across the Islamic world. The Ottoman fez became not only a hat for the Turks but for Indian Muslims, Egyptians, Moroccans and Malaysians. His failure was that he pursued his modernization program through a highly centralized, personal style, which opened him to charges of despotism. He came on the stage of history at a time when the empire was bankrupt and could not defend itself against its many enemies. In the face of aggression from without and sabotage from within, hammered by forces of nationalism and weakened by internal terrorism from some of the millets, he waged a valiant battle to preserve what was left of the once mighty empire. In this effort, he was partially successful, preserving its Islamic core for forty years and keeping the empire out of a major war for as long. But his methods and the internal tensions built up by the very modernization process he had fostered, finally did him in.

## **The Constitutional Revolution in Persia**

The Constitutional Revolution in Persia was the first mass movement of the 20th century in the Islamic world. It brought to the surface all the political and social currents that have shaped Islamic history in the last century—nationalism, pan-Islamism, the role of the ulema, international economic penetration, colonialism, foreign intrigue and internal despotism. The Persians waged a valiant battle to preserve their independence in the face of tremendous odds and, through sheer determination, succeeded where most other nations failed.

Towards the end of the 19th century Persia was caught between the claws of the Russian bear and the jaws of the British lion. The Russian armies had devoured the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and had made Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia into Russian satellites. Only the independent Islamic territories of the Ottoman Empire and Persia stood in the way of Russian ambitions to reach the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Meanwhile, Britain had consolidated its hold on its Indian Empire and had emerged as the dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean. Britain and France had reached an entente with respect to the territories of North Africa. While the Ottomans were recovering from the disastrous war with Russia (1876-1878), and were kept busy with insurrections in Greece and Bulgaria, Britain had moved to tighten its grip on Egypt while France swallowed up Tunisia and Algeria and was moving in on Morocco.

Russia used blatant military power to subdue its neighbors while

Britain and France used economic penetration as a means for political control and ultimate colonization. Tunis and Egypt illustrate this observation. The Beys (local rulers) in Tunis borrowed heavily from the French to support their personal lavish life styles (1865-1870). As they got deeper into debt their credit rating dropped, so the interest rates charged for additional loans zoomed up. When the Beys could not make payments on



the principal and interest, the Europeans appointed a Public Debt Commission with the power to confiscate revenue. French overseers were appointed in the key ministries of finance and internal affairs. When the Tunisians protested, the French moved in with military force to “maintain order”. Similarly, in Egypt, the Khedives borrowed heavily to finance the Suez Canal and their own extravagance, using Egyptian cotton as collateral. When the price of cotton fell in the world markets, Egypt could not pay its debts. The Europeans forced the Egyptian Public Debt Commission on Cairo and appointed English and French overseers in the departments of finance and internal affairs. An Armenian was hoisted as the prime minister. Khedive Ismail Pasha protested, but to no avail. He was forced out and was replaced by his more compliant son, Tawfiq Pasha. When public outrage at this heavy handedness erupted, and Turabi Pasha channeled it into a nationalist movement, the British sent in their navy, bombarded Alexandria and occupied Cairo (1882). The pretext, here again, was “to maintain order” so that the economic life of the country was not disturbed and debt collection could proceed smoothly. In effect, it was the death of Egyptian independence. Britain needed Egypt as a key transit point for its Indian Empire and sank its teeth deeper into the Nile valley, crushing a nationalist movement in the Sudan under the Mahdi (1884) and consolidating its hold on Egypt.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Persia was a poor land ruled by a despotic Shah and exploited by an oppressive ruling class. Nasiruddin Shah (1848-1896), fourth in the Qajar dynasty, ruled with an iron hand. He and his entourage lived in opulence, wasting precious resources on luxuries and ostentatious trips abroad while the vast majority of the people sank into abject poverty. Most people subsisted on agriculture, and land was the primary source of tax revenue. The Shah auctioned off tax collection to the highest bidder. The tax collectors, during their uncertain tenure, bilked the farmers to recover the amounts they had spent bribing the officials to obtain their contracts and compensate themselves for their efforts. The national budget showed a perpetual deficit. There were scant funds to maintain an efficient administration or an effective armed force. To finance his opulent life style, the Shah negotiated loans from English and Russian banks, mortgaging customs duties and hawking trade concessions in return. Resentment grew against the deteriorating conditions of the masses. In these difficult times, only the ulema stood between tyranny and justice,

articulating the frustrations of the people and standing up for their rights. This they could do because the Persian ulema sprang from among the masses and identified with them in their struggles. The Shah and his henchmen resented the independence of the ulema and did their best to bend them to the official will, banishing some of them from Persia and subjecting others to untold humiliations. Persia was like a tinderbox; all that was needed was a match to light the fire.

The incident that sparked the Constitutional Revolution was the Tobacco Concession of 1890. That year, Nasiruddin Shah granted a concession to an Englishman, F.G. Talbot, for the production, processing, distribution and sale of all tobacco grown in Persia for a period of 50 years in return for a paltry sum of 15,000 British pounds payable annually to the Persian government. The projected annual net profits of the Company were more than 500,000 pounds so that Persia's share of these profits was a trivial 3 percent.

The Talbot monopoly would have killed the indigenous tobacco industry. No farmer would be able to sell his product in the open market because a single buyer—the Talbot Tobacco Company—would control all purchases. Competition would die. The tobacco workers, of whom there were over 100,000 in the country, would be at the mercy of the company. Prices would rise and fall at the whims of foreigners who could stimulate production or choke it off to suit their own agendas.

Not to be outdone by the British in controlling the commerce of Persia, Prince Dolgorosky of Russia obtained a first refusal on any railroad project within the country for five years. A series of other concessions to foreigners followed. In 1891, Baron Julius de Reuter of England obtained exclusive privileges to issue bank notes and to exploit mineral resources. Shortly thereafter the Shah sold a lottery syndicate to a British company for 40,000 pounds claiming that the proceeds would be used to further education. These concessions, if implemented, would tighten the stranglehold of Russia and Britain on the economic life of the country. Was the example of Tunis and Egypt to repeat itself in Persia?

Resentment kept building up against the arbitrary rule of the Shah and the manner in which he was selling out his country to foreigners. Two of the towering personages of the age who articulated this resentment and became

prime movers in the events that followed were Seyyed Jamaluddin Afghani, a pan-Islamic activist, and Shaykh Hassan Tabrizi, a noted Persian scholar.

Seyyed Jamaluddin Afghani was undoubtedly one of the most influential Muslims of the era. Some consider him to be the principal figure in awakening Islamic political sentiments in Persia, Afghanistan, India, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Others criticize his role in the destruction of Islamic institutions, including the Sultanate of Persia and the Ottoman Caliphate and suspect that he was working in collusion with one European power or the other. The verdict of history on whether he was a patriot or a turncoat is not clear. It is easier to make a case that while he fervently believed in his grand pan-Islamic vision, he was caught in the whirlwinds of the times like so many Muslims of that era and became a partner in the demise of political institutions that had provided stability to the Islamic world for 500 years.

Seyyed Jamaluddin was born in 1838 at Asadabad near the Afghan-Persian border. He was called a Seyyed because his family claimed descent from the family of the Prophet through Imam Hussain. The title of “Afghani” refers to his Afghan-Persian heritage. As a youth, Seyyed Jamaluddin studied the Qur’an, Fiqh, Arabic grammar, philosophy, tasawwuf, logic, mathematics, and medicine, disciplines that were the backbone of an Islamic curriculum at that time. In 1856, at the age of eighteen, he spent a year in India and felt the rising pulse of the subcontinent, which was soon to erupt in the Sepoy Uprising of 1857. From India, Seyyed Jamal uddin visited Arabia where he performed his Hajj. Returning to Afghanistan in 1858, he was employed by Amir Dost Muhammed. His talents propelled him to the forefront of the Afghan hierarchy. When Dost Muhammed died and his brother Mohammed Azam became the emir, Jamaluddin was appointed the prime minister.

In 1869, Seyyed Jamaluddin fell out of favor with the emir and left Kabul for India. In Delhi, he received the red carpet treatment from British officials, who were at the same time careful not to let him meet the principal Indian Muslim leaders. That same year he visited Cairo on his way to Istanbul where his fame had preceded him and he was elected to the Turkish Academy. However, his “rational” interpretation of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet was deeply suspect in the eyes of the Turkish ulema and he was expelled from Istanbul in 1871.

Back in Cairo, Jamaluddin had a major role in the events that led to the overthrow of Khedive Ismail Pasha who had brought Egypt to its knees through his extravagance. European influence increased, and Jamaluddin was at the head of the Young Egyptian Movement and the nationalist uprising under Torabi Pasha (1881) that sought to expel the Europeans from Egypt. The British, suspicious of his motives, sent him back to India just before their occupation of Cairo in 1882.

From India, Seyyed Jamaluddin embarked on a journey through Europe and resided for various lengths of time in London, Paris and St. Petersburg. In Paris he met and influenced the Egyptian modernist Muhammed Abduh. Together, the two started a political organization *Urwah al Wuthqa* (The Unbreakable Bond) whose avowed purpose was to “modernize” Islam and protect the Islamic world from the greed of foreigners. Its strident anti-European tone annoyed the British who engineered to have the organization and its mouthpiece, the *Minaret*, shut down.

In 1889 Sultan Nasiruddin Shah of Persia visited St. Petersburg and invited Jamaluddin to return to Tehran, promising him the post of prime minister. A reluctant Jamaluddin saw an opportunity to influence events in the Islamic heartland and returned, soon to find himself out of favor with the monarch. Fearing the wrath of the Shah, Jamaluddin took refuge in the Shrine of Shah Abdul Azeem and from the sanctuary, denounced the Shah as a tyrant and advocated his overthrow. It was while he stayed in the sanctuary that Jamaluddin met and influenced the principal figures who had a major impact on the subsequent turbulent events in Persia, including the assassination of Nasiruddin Shah.

The Shah, furious at Seyyed Jamaluddin’s tirades, banished him from Persia in 1891. The Seyyed arrived in Istanbul and was warmly received by Sultan Abdul Hamid II who nonetheless kept a close watch on his activities. Jamaluddin Afghani spent the rest of his life in Istanbul and died of cancer in 1896.

Two principal themes run through the life and work of Seyyed Jamaluddin Afghani. First, his proclaimed goal was to unite the Islamic world under a single caliph resident in Istanbul. Towards this end, he sought a rapprochement between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, working to have the Shah recognize the Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph of all Muslims, while the Caliph recognized the Shah as the sovereign of all Shi’as. He wrote to

the leading theologians of Karbala, Tabriz and Tehran, passionately arguing his case and was partially successful in bringing them to his point of view. However, the rapprochement did not take place due to the political turbulence in Persia. Second, he sought to “modernize” Islam to make it responsive, as he saw it, to the needs of the age. The movement that he started, which was spread by his disciple, Muhammed Abduh of Egypt, was called the salafi movement. It derives from the word “as salaf as salehin” (the pious ancestors) and refers to the legal opinions advanced by the first three generations after the Prophet. It was essentially a rationalist and apologist movement, which sought to bring about a nahda (renaissance) of Islamic thought. Muhammed Abduh sought to replace the four schools of Sunnah Fiqh (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali) with a single Fiqh. He taught that the laws of the Qur’an could be “rationalized” and if necessary reinterpreted. The salafi movement had a major impact on Arab intellectual circles around the turn of the 20th century and also influenced the Aligarh movement in India as well as the Muhammadiya movement in Indonesia. The movement, however, had no roots either in Islamic traditions or Islamic history. The nahda was suspected of attempting to secularize Islam, just as the renaissance of the 16th century had secularized the Latin West. As a mass movement, the salafi movement was a failure and was rejected by the Islamic world.

Returning to events in Persia, the Tobacco Concession of 1889 roused a public outcry. When the Talbot Tobacco Company started its operations in 1891 riots broke out in the major cities. The disturbances in Tabriz were particularly intense. An alarmed Shah invited the Russians to intervene and bring order to Tabriz but the Russians refused.

At this juncture Jamaluddin Afghani saw a golden opportunity to engineer the overthrow of the hated Shah. From Istanbul, he wrote to the leading ulema in Persia, including Hajji Mirza Abul Kasim of Karbala, Hajji Mirza Muhammed Hassan of Shiraz, Hajji Shaykh Muhammed Taqi of Isfahan and Hajji Mirza Jawad of Tabriz. He emphasized to them the dangers facing the Islamic world from European intrigue. He pointed out how economic penetration had resulted in the enslavement of Egypt and Tunis, and if the Persians did not resist the tyrant Shah, the same fate awaited them too. He underscored the need for independent ulema who alone could serve as the backbone of resistance to the European onslaught.

He pointed out how the destruction of the power of the ulema in India and Central Asia had led to the colonization of those lands while Afghanistan was saved from the same fate by the vigilance of the ulema. The Shah, wrote Jamaluddin in his letters, had forced many of the ulema to flee the land of their birth along with thousands of patriotic Persians. In short, he roused the religious and patriotic fervor of the clerics to take a stand against the Tobacco Concession and to reign in the Shah.

Jamaluddin Afghani's letters had their desired effect. The ulema were stirred into action. The subsequent events gave a stunning display of their power and the role of religion in the politics of Persia. These events were a forerunner of the upheavals that accompanied the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the Iranian Revolution of 1978.

It is not generally known that the first effective application of nonviolent methods in modern times to achieve social and political goals was in Persia under the ulema and not in India under Gandhi or in the United States under Martin Luther King. It was the Muslims of Persia who showed in 1890 that nonviolent civil disobedience was a powerful weapon in combating injustice and tyranny.

Moved by the eloquence of Jamaluddin Afghani, Hajji Mirza Hassan Shirazi wrote to the Shah that the sellout of the tobacco industry was against the interests of the people and contrary to the injunctions of the Qur'an. When it did not elicit a satisfactory response, the learned cleric gave a fatwa that under the circumstances, the consumption of tobacco was haram (forbidden). He enjoined the people to abstain from tobacco. This was the first instance of peaceful disobedience in modern times and it was a political masterstroke. The tobacco boycott was a stunning success. Habitual smokers gave up smoking. Merchants closed their shops. Pipes were set aside. The poor as well as the rich obeyed the command of the learned Hajji Mirza.

The successful boycott thrust the religious leadership into the forefront of the national struggle, a role that has continued to this day. The peaceful Islamic spirit of the Persian people never shone so brightly as it did in that hour. It was a convincing demonstration of the positive role of religion in the national struggle against foreign domination. The people showed discipline and cohesion and affirmed their solidarity with their spiritual leaders. They demonstrated that there were limits to their toleration of

injustice, whether it was forced upon them from within or imposed from abroad.

The boycott had its desired effect. The shares of the Imperial (British) Bank, which had financed the Talbot Tobacco Company, fell by 50%. Faced with the overwhelming will of the people, the Shah relented and withdrew the Tobacco Concession (1892). The Persian government agreed to compensate the Talbot Company a sum of 500,000 British pounds. The prestige of Britain suffered while that of Russia, which had refused to intervene in the turmoil, went up.

Sultan Nasiruddin Shah did not survive the aftermath of the Tobacco Concession for long. A zealot, Mirza Muhammed Riza of Kirman, who had been influenced by the ideas of Jamaluddin Afghani, assassinated the Shah in 1896. Mirza Muhammed was captured, tortured and executed.

The new Sultan Muzaffaruddin Shah was a man of weak health and still weaker resolution. He was no less inclined than his father to a life of luxury. He too sought loans from European bankers at exorbitant interest rates to finance his life style. Ultimately, his rule also foundered on the rock of foreign loans.

Immediately upon his accession, Muzaffaruddin Shah planned an ostentatious state visit to Europe. As the country teetered on the verge of bankruptcy and there was no money in the treasury, the Shah floated a loan of one million British pounds in London. The credit rating of Persia was so poor that the loan was not subscribed to and the Shah had to abandon the planned trip. Determined to raise funds for a future trip, he turned his attention to fleecing his own subjects.

The Russians stepped in where the British had stumbled. They offered the Shah a loan of 20 million Russian rubles at 5 % interest repayable in 75 years. The cash-hungry Shah gladly accepted the loan and set off on his European tour, visiting among other places, Paris, St. Petersburg and Istanbul. The British, showing their pique at the Russian loan, snubbed the Shah and he was unable to visit London. By the time he returned from his grand tour, the Shah had consumed 11 million of the 20 million rubles. Of this amount, a sum of 4 million rubles (500,000 British pounds) was used to pay off the loan from the Imperial Bank, which had been used in 1891 to

indemnify the Imperial Tobacco Company. Only 4 million rubles remained which he used to tighten his grip on the increasingly restless population.

In return for the loan, the Shah mortgaged the customs taxes from all the northern frontiers of Persia. Unable to find reliable henchmen who would collect and forward to him the customs taxes, he hired Belgian tax collectors to do the dirty work. The Belgians behaved like imperial lords, imposing high tariffs and treating the Persians with contempt.

Flush with their victory in penetrating the Persian court through their loan, the Russians moved to increase their influence. They inaugurated a subsidized shipping line between the Black Sea and the

Persian Gulf, ostensibly to increase trade but in reality to augment their presence in the Gulf and become a player in the rivalry between the Ottomans and the British for control of Kuwait and Bahrain.

The Shah had, in effect, mortgaged the future of his country to finance his grand tours and his opulence. Strapped for cash, he approached the Czar once again for a second loan. A second loan of 10 million rubles was granted in 1902 but this time the loan came with strings attached. The Shah was required to accept Belgian oversight (Belgium was allied with Russia) over all the financial operations in Persia. The Belgians spread out into every single branch of the government, making their imperial presence felt. Not a ruble could be spent nor one collected without their knowledge and consent.

Britain had kept a close watch on the increasing influence of Russia. The Boer War in South Africa had temporarily distracted her. Having successfully concluded that war, Britain reasserted its position in Persia and the Gulf. Its strategic interest was to guard the sea-lanes and land routes leading to its Indian Empire and it perceived that threats to this strategic interest could emerge from Russia, Germany or the Ottomans. The British position was stated in the Monroe doctrine of 1903. It asserted that the right to establish railroads or railroad terminals in the Gulf was the exclusive privilege of Britain and any attempt on the part of another power to do so would be resisted by force of arms. This was a clear warning to the Russians and to the Germans who were negotiating with the Ottomans to build a railroad through Iraq to Kuwait.



Events in Russia provided momentum to the protests in Persia. The Russian-Japanese war (1904-1905) over control of Manchuria and Korea ended in a complete victory for Japan and the surrender of Russian forces. The war demonstrated that the armies of the Czar were not invincible and could be beaten by an Asian power. In response to the defeat and as an expression of other grievances, there were popular demonstrations in St. Petersburg. The Czar was forced to create an Imperial Duma (Russian Parliament) and to institute reforms and share some of his imperial powers with the people.

The defeat of the Czar's armies and the creation of the Imperial

Duma encouraged the Persians. The ulema of Tabriz, Karbala and Najaf wrote to the Shah advising him to rescind the concessions. The reply was vague, so the ulema declared that they were asking Sultan Abdul Hamid of the Ottomans, as Caliph of Islam, to take Persia under his protection. In Tehran, the protests culminated in the mass migration of the ulema to the sanctuary of Shah Abdul Azeem in December 1905. The townsfolk, workers, merchants and bureaucrats followed suit. The throngs swelled to more than 20,000 people. This was the Persian equivalent of a peaceful "sit-in" to show the Shah that the people had had enough and would not tolerate oppression any more. Threats from the Shah and his prime minister proved fruitless and the Shah had to cave in. Under his own signature he wrote to the ulema promising reforms, the removal of the corrupt officials and the constitution of a Majlis e Adalat (Court of Justice).

The Shah did not keep his promises. Restlessness grew with each passing month and protests broke out again in June 1906. The shops were shuttered and a large number of people took refuge in the Juma' Masjid where the ulema denounced the Shah and his henchman. More migrations from the capital to other shrines followed until the capital city looked like a ghost town. The governor tried coercion by locking up the shops of merchants participating in the hitherto peaceful protests but this method did not work. In desperation, he surrounded the Juma' Masjid and ordered its occupants out. The order was refused; a fight took place, in which one of the clerics died. The burial procession for the dead cleric attracted thousands of mourners. The Shah's troops dispersed the mourners killing scores of people.

The ulema, witnessing the violent methods of the authorities, agreed to vacate the Juma' Masjid and to move south, to the city of Qum. Multitudes deserted Tehran and marched out with the ulema. The governor, seeing that the shops were still closed, ordered them opened and threatened that if his orders were not obeyed, he would command his soldiers to loot them. Determined to continue their non-violent protests, some of the ulema sought refuge in the British Embassy. The Embassy granted permission and soon the number of refugees there swelled to 15,000.

The Shah was checkmated. He could not force an evacuation from the British embassy. The protests had engulfed the entire nation. He dismissed the unpopular governor of Tehran and wrote a letter under his signature promising to punish those responsible for the repression. By now the people had lost faith in the promises of the Shah. They demanded constitutional reform and the formation of a Majlis with legislative authority. The demands included that the Majlis be composed of 200 members elected by eligible males between the ages of thirty and seventy. The Shah was in failing health and his resolve flickered. In September 1906 he accepted all of these demands.

A committee was immediately constituted to draft the electoral laws. The committee worked overtime and within thirty days submitted a draft to the Shah for his signature. The draft envisaged a total of 156 members for the Majlis, 60 to be elected from Tehran and the remainder from the provinces. Members were to be elected for a term of two years. Direct elections were prescribed for Tehran and indirect elections were proposed for the provinces. The Shah approved the draft and the Majlis was born.

Within a month, the Majlis members from Tehran were elected and went to work. The electoral law had made a provision, on an interim basis, for the Tehran delegates to commence work even before the arrival of delegates from the provinces. This was done to prevent the Shah from sabotaging the Majlis even before it started its work. Two of the important issues facing the nation were the drafting of the Fundamental Laws and the financial crisis. By November 1906 the Majlis prepared a draft for the Fundamental Laws. The religion of the state was to be Islam and the Ithna Ashari Fiqh, the governing school of jurisprudence. The lives and properties of all citizens and all foreign subjects were guaranteed. The people of Persia were guaranteed equal rights and due process before the law. The Qajar dynasty

was accorded sovereignty as a trust conferred by the Divine. The Majlis was given “the right in all questions to propose any measure, which it regards as conducive to the well being of the government and the people, after due discussion and deliberation thereof in all sincerity and truth”. Five members of the Majlis were to be from the ulema, who had the privilege of screening legislation to ensure its compliance with Islam. Local government was slated to be in the hands of elected anjumans (provincial assemblies and municipal councils).

To solve the financial crisis facing the country and to extricate it from foreign control, the Majlis proposed the creation of a national bank with a capital of 6 million tumans, so that the authority to create credit and to manage the inflow and outflow of capital from the country, rested with Persians. The foreign banks, controlled by Britain and Russia, had on more than one occasion demonstrated their stranglehold on the financial affairs of the country. In 1906, in response to an increase in the international price of silver, large amounts of Persian tumans were smuggled into British India, where they were melted down into Indian rupee coins, which had smaller silver content. When silver coins became scarce, the Imperial Bank, controlled by Britain, flooded the Persian market with paper currency. Inflation rose, compounding the financial problems of Persia. The Majlis was aware of the critical role that finance played in foreign control and its members were conscious of the fate of Egypt, which had fallen prey to foreign financial interests. The Majlis members and the ulema made a fervent appeal to the people for subscriptions to the new bank. The response was overwhelming. Rich and poor alike came forward with subscriptions. But this project was not successful due to the determined opposition of both Britain and Russia. The foreign banks withheld credit and made paper money scarce, choking off commerce and contributions alike. As a result the financial strings of Persia remained in foreign hands.

Under prodding of the ulema, Sultan Muzaffaruddin Shah signed the constitution from his deathbed on the last of 1906. He died a week later and was succeeded by his son Muhammed Ali Mirza who was even more averse to the controls imposed on him by the constitution than was his father. He snubbed the leaders of the Majlis and did not even invite them to his coronation. The provincial governors continued to hamper the progress of

the elections. A frustrated populace protested and riots broke out in Shiraz, Tabriz, Kirmanshah, Maku and Fars.

The principal concern of the new Shah, like that of his father, was to raise loans to finance his lavish lifestyle. A new loan of 400,000 British pounds, to be underwritten jointly by Britain and Russia, was in the negotiation phase. The Majlis acted swiftly and decisively to block it and to forbid any fresh loans without its consent. It passed a resolution that the annual expenditures of the Shah were subject to approval by the Majlis and that he should be held to the allotted budget. It also demanded that the detested Belgians who had been imported to oversee the finances of the country be dismissed forthwith.

Faced with popular unrest and countrywide demonstrations, Muhammed Ali Shah fired the Belgians but bid his time to throttle the Majlis. He invited Mirza Ali Asghar Khan, who had served as prime minister during his father's reign (1901-1903) but who had been forced out of the country by popular demand because of his repressive methods, to return and assume the position of prime minister. Mirza Ali was a wily politician who had served his old master, the previous Shah well and was opposed to the constitutional reforms. The Majlis, in a gesture of goodwill, allowed him to return to Persia from Europe after declaring verbally that he supported the constitution. The Shah promptly appointed him prime minister and Mirza Ali set out, step by step, to destroy the Majlis.

The principal figure in the plot to derail the reforms was a cleric, Shaykh Fazlullahi Nuri. He was hired by the Shah's agents to cast suspicion on some of the Majlis members. Shaykh Fazlullahi was one of the clerics elected to the Majlis, but he resigned his post and retired to the sanctuary of Shah Abdul Azeem on the outskirts of Tehran from where he denounced his former colleagues as atheists. The shaykh then conspired to forge certain documents to prove that certain members of the anjumans in Azerbaijan had used blasphemous expressions against the Prophet.

The Shaykh's agents were successful in fomenting riots in Tabriz and Kirman, providing a pretext for intervention by the Shah and his foreign sponsors. Neither the Czar of Russia nor Sultan Abdul Hamid of the Ottomans was happy with the constitutional reforms in Persia, which they feared would spill over into their own countries. There was also a deep suspicion in Istanbul that the reforms were engineered from outside to

destroy traditional institutions in the Islamic world, making it easier for the European powers to destabilize and ultimately occupy the Muslim heartland.

In July 1907 the Ottomans sent in troops to occupy border areas in Kurdistan, presumably to quell disturbances there, but in reality to put pressure on the Majlis. Meanwhile, the Czar sent a stern note to the Shah saying that Russia could not indefinitely tolerate disturbances on her borders. Britain, which had up until that time pretended to be a friend of the Constitutional Revolution, made an about face and advised the Persians to listen to and accommodate the Russians.

The problems facing the Majlis continued to mount. Military and diplomatic pressures from Russia and the Ottomans increased. The treasury was empty and there were no funds to pay the troops. The Majlis was vehemently opposed to any fresh loans from Russia or Britain. The prime minister, who was one of the Shah's men, persisted in his efforts to obtain a loan from the Russians, a move so unpopular that he was shot dead by a zealot, Abbas Aqa. So great was the antipathy towards foreign domination that the body of the assassin Abbas Aqa received a mass funeral worthy of a national hero. Celebrations were held on the fortieth day after his burial and orators compared him to those who died with Imam Hussain at the historic Battle of Karbala.

The international scene grew more ominous as Britain and Russia agreed to partition Persia and signed the Anglo-Russian Agreement. The Agreement divided Persia into three zones. The northern and by far the largest and most populous zone, extending from Azerbaijan to the Afghan border, was allocated to Russia. The southern zone, adjoining Baluchistan and straddling the entrance to the Persian Gulf was allotted to the British. A central zone, separating the Russians and the British, was left for the Persians to govern. Russia saw the advantages of an entente with Britain on the Persian question, since it was turning its attention to the Far East and its rivalry with the empire of Japan for control of Manchuria. So it was in 1908 that Russia and Britain reached the same kind of understanding with respect to Persia, as had France and Britain with respect to North Africa and Egypt in the 1870s.

The proposed partition of Persia was the culmination of a developing entente between the principal European powers in the latter half of the 19th

century. After the Napoleonic wars Britain realized that there was more to be gained by working with rather than against its principal rival France in the Great Game of world colonization. Diplomacy was a cheaper way to achieve its goals than war. An understanding gradually developed between the two powers whereby England accepted French domination over Algeria, Tunis and Morocco, while France acquiesced in British domination over Egypt. Russia was a latecomer to this game. It faced a major obstacle in the Ottoman and Persian Empires in its desires to reach the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

It was in the joint interest of Britain and France to keep the Russians out while they consolidated their hold on North Africa and Egypt. Hence, they intervened on behalf of the Ottomans in the Crimean War (1854-1856) to ensure that Russia did not dominate the Ottoman Empire. After the emergence of a unified Germany under Bismarck, Russia too was convinced that its interests lay in cooperation with Britain and France to contain Germany and win its share of the spoils as the Ottoman Empire disintegrated.

After the Russian-Ottoman war of 1876-1878, England sided with Russia in ensuring that the Czar got his share in the eastern Ottoman provinces of Armenia and Azerbaijan and his domination of Romania and Bulgaria was confirmed. Towards the end of the 19th century, the evolving entente extended to include British and Russian understanding over Persia. The collusion of Britain, France and Russia to divide up the Ottoman Empire and Persia bound the Entente Powers in the Great Game and it explains why they fought as a unit against the encroachments of Austria-Hungary and Germany in the First World War.

Despite the avowed denials from London and St. Petersburg, the Anglo-Russian Agreement for the partition of Persia could be read like an open book. The Persian masses and scholars alike were alert to the impending calamity. Only the Shah seemed oblivious to the future of his country but since he was the one who had mortgaged his country for a pittance, his only recourse was to hang on to power no matter what the cost.

The assassination of Prime Minister Abbas Aqa had thrown the political landscape into turmoil. The next prime minister, a protégé of the Shah, lasted but a few weeks while protests and sit-ins multiplied in the provincial towns. The Shah, while swearing by the Qur'an in public that he was

faithful to the constitution, secretly planned a coup against the Majlis. To finance his planned operations, he raised a loan from the Russian Bank, mortgaging crown jewels and hawking jewelry belonging to the queen.

The Shah made his move on December 15, 1907 and sent a battalion of Cossack troops to surround the Majlis building. His selected goons mounted rooftops around the building to intimidate anyone who dared oppose the Cossacks. Some hired mullahs blared their denunciation of the Majlis, calling its members unbelievers and blasphemers. The Majlis, caught off-guard, offered no resistance. But as news of the planned coup spread, Persia exploded in protest. In Tehran, the merchants shuttered their shops. Commerce came to a halt. Armed guards belonging to the various political parties came out to oppose the Cossacks. Telegrams were sent from the provincial capitals calling for the ouster of the Shah. Tabriz sent an armed detachment of 1,000 horsemen. Faced with this avalanche, the Shah called the Cossacks back, swore on the Qur'an that he would abide by the constitution and the first standoff between the Majlis and the sovereign ended in a stalemate.

This was however a temporary truce and tensions between the two sides continued to mount. Each side blamed the other for acts of violence, which increased day by day. The situation was volatile enough as it was but the intervention of Russia and Britain at this juncture added fuel to the fire.

On June 2, 1908, a joint delegation of Russian and British ambassadors met the Persian foreign minister and threatened that Russia would intervene militarily unless the threats against the Shah ceased forthwith. The next day, under cover of panic created in the capital by Russian agents and paid hirelings, the Shah fled from his palace to the

King's Gardens located outside the city, under a Russian armed escort. On June 4, he invited some of the notables of the Majlis to meet with him and discuss matters of mutual concern. Upon their arrival, the treacherous Shah ordered the Cossacks to arrest them. On June 7, the Shah declared martial law and put a Russian, Colonel Liakhoff, in charge of maintaining order in the capital. He sent a message to the Majlis demanding the shutting down of the free press and the expulsion from the capital of the political leaders and the editors of major newspapers.

These demands were impossible to meet and as negotiations continued, the Shah ordered the movement of more arms and ammunition from the city to the King's Gardens. On June 23, a brigade of Cossack horsemen, under command of Liakhoff and his Russian staff, entered the courtyard around which were located the Majlis building and an adjoining mosque. The deputies were locked up in the Majlis building. Liakhoff ordered the placement of heavy guns at strategic locations around the courtyard and started a bombardment, which soon reduced the Majlis building and the mosque to rubble. A large number of deputies and several defending youth, were slain. Those who were not killed, or who could not escape, were taken prisoner and hauled away, chains around their necks. Some of the deputies sought refuge in the British embassy but were refused entry. Others, like Hajji Mirza Ibrahim, were shot while resisting attempts by the soldiers to strip them naked in public. Some were hauled off to the King's Gardens and strangled. Included among those killed on that fateful day were the great orators Aqa Seyyed Jamaluddin and the Malikul Mutakkallimun, both from Isfahan, who were the backbone of the mass movement that had organized schools and social services in Tehran and the provincial capitals.

The Shah promoted Colonel Liakhoff to be the martial law officer for Tehran. Determined, cold blooded and ruthless, Liakhoff let loose a reign of terror in the capital. Houses belonging to deputies, their relatives and sympathizers were looted and hundreds were killed in cold blood. Tehran turned into a city under occupation and witnessed the dance of death and destruction for several days.

News of the reign of terror in Tehran reached the provinces and a national resistance movement began. Tabriz, the second largest city in Persia, was in the vanguard of this movement. The Constitutionalists, under the leadership of one Sattar Khan, occupied the administrative headquarters and declared that they no longer recognized the Shah. The surrounding villages joined the uprising so that Tabriz, in essence, became a city-state, opposed to the Shah and run by the constitutionalists.

In response, the Shah unleashed the notorious Shahseven tribe upon Tabriz. The unruly men of this tribe were known for their love of plunder and loot. They attacked the villages around the city, killing the men, abusing the women, looting their belongings and were successful in cutting off all roads into and out of the city. The Constitutionalists garrisoned the



town and stopped the advance of the Shahseveners. As the siege of Tabriz progressed, and food supplies in the city became scarce, the Shah, to put additional pressure on the Constitutionalists and force Tabriz into submission, dispatched contingents of Silahkhuri and Cossack troops under the command of Russian officers. Undaunted, the city held on, the Silahkhuri troops were beaten back, the Cossack advance was brought to a standstill; the siege dragged on for months.

More ominous were the moves of the Russian army to the north. The Czar was no lover of constitutional reforms. The recent success of the Young Turks in Istanbul in forcing Sultan Abdul Hamid II to reinstate the Ottoman constitution (1908) had given the Czar additional cause for concern. But the Russians also knew that any foreign intervention in Persia would meet with mass opposition. The Czar therefore chose a cautious approach, acting with Britain to ensure the protection of European property, but otherwise staying clear of the civil war between the Shah and the Constitutionalists. A British gunboat appeared off the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas to show the flag, while a column of Russian troops entered Azerbaijan and marched to Tabriz without opposition either from the constitutionalists or the Shah's forces. The siege of Tabriz was lifted, food supplies were brought in, the Shahseveners were dispersed and the city resumed a semblance of normalcy.

The fall of Tabriz did not mean the end of the uprising. In Isfahan to the south, and Rasht to the north, new armies arose under the leadership of the Bakhtiari dervishes. The Bakhtiaris were a sufi order and had fought through the centuries on the side of justice and fair play in the many feuds and wars that had raged in Persia. They were resolute warriors, tough, resilient, like their brethren Naqshbandis in the Caucasus and the Jazuliyas in far-away West Africa. The southern armies from Isfahan were under the proven and capable leadership of Sardar e Asad and Shamsamus Sultan. The northern armies from Rasht were under the command of the equally capable Nasrus Sultana Muhammed Wali Khan. Both armies, after overcoming local resistance from the Shah's forces, were poised to march on Tehran.

The mobilization of Bakhtiari dervishes set off alarm signals in London and St. Petersburg. Hoping to preserve a semblance of power for the Shah, they advised him to accommodate the nationalists and reinstate the Majlis,

if only to buy time. But the Shah remained stubborn and noncommittal. The Czar sent a blunt warning to the Nationalists that unless the northern armies stopped their march, the Russian army might intervene. A contingent of Russian troops did land at Anzali on their way to Tehran. But this saber rattling failed to impress the Bakhtiari. The northern armies moved on Qizwin, on the approaches to Tehran, while the southern armies advanced upon Qum, the spiritual capital of Persia. On June 12, 1909, advanced columns of the Bakhtiari troops entered Tehran. Resistance from the Cossack brigade was heavy but after several days fighting, the Cossacks surrendered and the Shah took refuge in the Russian embassy. There was jubilation in the capital. The leaders of the conquering armies met on July 16, 1909 with the ulema and the available members of the Majlis and deposed Muhammed Ali Shah. His young son, Ahmed Mirza was placed on the throne as Sultan Ahmed Shah.

Thus ended the Constitutional Revolution that began with the Tobacco Concession of 1891, and after a struggle lasting 18 years, succeeded in eliminating the tyranny of the Shah. It brought the rule of law to Persia where previously there was rule by dictate. It succeeded in preserving the independence and territorial integrity of Persia in the face of the avowed intent of Britain and Russia to partition and occupy the land. It awakened the latent nationalism of the Persians and it presaged the nationalist movement of Mosaddegh in 1954. And it propelled the ulema to the forefront of the national struggle, an element that was to show itself with volcanic power in the Iranian Revolution of 1978.

# PRELUDE TO THE MODERN AGE

## *Summary*

*It was a war that the Ottomans could have avoided. Instead, they J. fell headlong into it without preparation and it was a total disaster for the Turk and the Arab alike. All the elements that plagued West Asia in the second half of the twentieth century—nationalism, unstable borders, western domination, the wars of Palestinian succession—were a product of the First World War.*

*The Ottomans had two primary goals in the war. First, contain Russian ambitions in the Bosphorus and in the Caucasus. Second, win back the territories in the Balkans lost in the war of 1913. The Entente Powers, Russia, Britain and France had their goals set on the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans entered the fray when the tide of war appeared to favor the German-Hapsburg coalition. But the momentum soon shifted and the Ottomans found themselves in a no-win situation. From a Muslim perspective, the conduct of the war may be divided into three phases. The first phase, between 1914 and 1916 was a stalemate. The second phase, between 1916 and 1918, was characterized by the Arab uprising. The Bolshevik Revolution took Russia out of the war while the United States joined in on the side of the Entente Powers. The second phase ended with the Ottoman surrender. In the third phase, between 1918 and 1924, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered; Greece invaded Anatolia and was beaten back. Turkey became a republic and the Caliphate was abolished.*

## **The First World War and the Dissolution of the Caliphate**

The Balkans was the powder keg that ignited the Great War.

Surrounded by the Adriatic Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the strategic Balkan Peninsula funnels down and meets up with the landmass of Asia at the Sea of Marmara. The ancient city of Istanbul sits astride the Bosphorus Strait that separates Asia from Europe and provides the only outlet for shipping from the Black Sea to the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

The Peninsula lies at the crossroads of three great religious traditions. The expansive Islamic world extends from West Asia into the Peninsula with a large concentration of Muslims in Turkey, Albania, Bosnia, Kosova and Skopje. Catholic Europe meets up with the Islamic world along an axis linking Istanbul with Vienna. Bisecting it almost at ninety degrees is the Orthodox Christian world running roughly along an axis linking Athens with Moscow. Compounding the mix of beliefs are a multiplicity of nationalities and ethnic groups: the Croats, Slovans, Czechs and Hungarians to the north; Bosnians, Albanians and Macedonians to the west; Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians to the east; Turks and Greeks to the south. The simultaneous presence of myriad religious beliefs, nationalities and ethnic groups has produced a volatile mixture of competing interests throughout history.

Towards the turn of the 19th century, Islamic influence extended deeper into eastern Europe, northern Thrace and the territories around the Black Sea. This was a result of Ottoman rule, which had kept the Balkans united for more than 500 years under a single political umbrella. The regression of Ottoman power encouraged the ambitions of the Hapsburgs in Austria-Hungary and czarist Russia. The czars encouraged local nationalist

uprisings against the Turks, hoping to dominate the emerging Eastern Orthodox states while the Austrians expanded their influence with fellow Catholic Croats. While these three great land empires contested for turf in southeastern Europe, the maritime powers of England and France had their own interests in preventing Russian access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean and containing the rising tide of German power in continental Europe.

Economic interests dominated the geopolitics of the times. After the war of 1871, Germany, under Bismarck, emerged as the single most powerful land power in continental Europe. Germany sought to cultivate influence in the Balkans and to keep the competing Austrian and Russian interests at bay by arranging a series of treaties with the local nationalities. Germany also sought to compensate for its late arrival on the colonial scene by expanding its influence in East Africa and the Persian Gulf. German diplomatic activism alarmed England and France who held the lion's share of colonies in Asia and Africa. The interests of France, England and Russia thus converged in containing German ambitions and the three entered into a treaty called the Triple Entente. To counter this coalition, the Germans formed their own alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy.

The military weakness of the Ottomans was obvious to the European powers after the Crimean War (1854-1856) and the geopolitical game was to see who would pick up the pieces once the empire came apart. To the British, Egypt was the key to the Indian Empire. The French, remembering the Norman kingdom of the Levant, desired Syria and had their eyes on Morocco as well. The Russians, as the self-proclaimed champions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, claimed Istanbul and the Straits of Dardanelles but their interests lay in access to warm waters, which the British and the French were equally determined to deny them. Even the Italians, latecomers to the imperialist game, had their eyes on Libya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The competing ambitions of Austria-Hungary and Russia and their covert support for Balkan nationalisms added to the convulsions in the Balkans. Both sought to expand their influence at the expense of the Ottomans. Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1909) waged a valiant battle to frustrate the European ambitions. But he was up against heavy odds. The Empire was deep in debt after the Crimean War. The cost of containing Balkan nationalisms was high. Military pressures from the Austrians and the

Russians were unrelenting. The debt burden kept mounting until, at times, more than 80% of the Ottoman budget was earmarked for debt servicing. To service these debts, Sultan Abdul Hamid had to swallow a series of capitulatory agreements with the European powers and acquiesce in the British occupation of Egypt (1882). The stresses on the old Ottoman system kept building until it cracked under the double hammer of European pressures and internal calls for reform. Finally, in 1908 Sultan Abdul Hameed was forced to surrender his powers to the Young Turks.

That same year, in 1908, the empire of Austria-Hungary, encouraged by Germany, annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, a move that let loose the fires of nationalism in the Balkans. The first to explode was Albania. Seeking to expand their influence further south, the Hapsburgs encouraged the Catholic minority in Albania to demand greater autonomy from the Ottomans. Taken in by propaganda, a large number of Muslims also joined in the protests, demanding a greater share of political power in the empire and recognition of Albanian language and culture. While the Ottomans were preoccupied with Albania, the Italians invaded Libya (1911). The cities of Tripoli and Benghazi were bombarded and the Ottoman garrisons were forced to surrender. The Ottomans sent two of their ablest generals, Enver Bey (later to become the Ottoman Defense Minister during World War I) and Mustafa Kemal (later to lead the Turkish War of Independence) to prevent the Italians from penetrating deeper into Libya. The generals were partially successful in their efforts thanks to the support they received from the

Sanusiya sufis and the Italian advance was contained to the coastal cities.

The Italian invasion of Libya and the disturbances in Albania were only a prelude to a total onslaught on European Ottoman territories. When the Catholic Hapsburgs annexed Bosnia, each of the Balkan rump states pressed their claims on Macedonia. The Czar in St. Petersburg openly supported the aggressive designs of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece. In 1913, these states reached an understanding on carving up the Balkans and began a combined assault on the Ottomans. While the Turks were busy defending Libya, the Serbs advanced on eastern Albania and took Kosova. The Montenegrins overran northern Albania, the Greeks moved into western Thrace, while the Bulgars occupied the city of Edirne and advanced towards Istanbul. The combined strength of the invading armies was 700,000 against Ottoman defensive garrisons numbering

100,000. Unable to defend themselves, the Ottomans retreated on all fronts. Serb terrorism against Turkish peasants increased. Tens of thousands of Muslims were butchered by the so-called Christian armies and more than a million refugees were sent reeling towards Istanbul. The Balkan War of 1913 marked the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. By the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), the Ottomans withdrew from the Balkans, except for a small portion of Thrace.

Occupation of Balkan territories did not satisfy the rival claims of the Eastern Orthodox states, which were soon at each other's throats. Bulgaria felt cheated and fought a losing war with Serbia and Greece. The Serbs, encouraged by the Russians, initiated a guerilla war against the Catholic Hapsburgs in Bosnia to force them out and swallow up the territory for themselves. With the Balkans in turmoil, Francis Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, set off for Sarajevo to bring the situation in Bosnia under control. There, a Serbian terrorist, Gavrilo Princip, murdered him on June 18, 1914. Austria, holding Serbia responsible for the murder, declared war on July 28. Russia, as protector of Eastern Orthodox Serbia, declared war on Austria. Germany, bound to Austria by language and treaty, declared war on the Czar. The Russians, French and the British were bound as partners in the Triple

Entente. France and England therefore joined the fray on the Russian side. On August 3rd, Germany declared war on France. On August 4th, Britain declared war on Germany. The Great War had begun.

Ottoman entry into the war was not inevitable. In historical hindsight, Istanbul could have successfully waited out the war and could have even benefited from the bloodshed between the European powers. But the Ottoman defense minister, Enver Bey saw in the ensuing hostilities a golden opportunity to recover lost Balkan territories and to contain the Russian threat. Initial German successes against the French and the Russians seemed to indicate that Germany and Austria-Hungary might well win the war. In their initial thrust, German armies occupied Poland in August 1914 and pushed deep into Serbia and Romania. On the western front, they attacked through Belgium, broke through French defenses and in September 1914, were within 20 miles of Paris. Opinion within the Turkish cabinet was divided. Turkey was not ready for war after the disastrous Balkan War of 1913. But Enver was determined on his course. Negotiations with the

Germans were conducted in strict secrecy. Only Enver and the Grand Vizier knew of the negotiations and the defense treaty was presented to the cabinet as a *fait accompli* only after it was signed and sealed. Sensing that most Turks were still vacillating, Germany sent two billion kurush of gold to Istanbul on October 21, 1914. To the debt ridden Ottomans, this infusion of cash was most welcome news. The gold tipped the scales and the Ottomans went to war. Hostilities commenced between the Ottoman and Russian navies in the Black Sea. On November 5, 1914, Britain, France and Russia declared war on the Ottomans.

Thus it was that the Ottomans entered the Great War for which they were not prepared. At great historical moments, the instincts of those in power play a decisive role in the fate of nations. Enver Bey and his supporters were so preoccupied with the Russian threat that they did not grasp the full import of their fateful decision. Their instincts failed them at this critical moment. Germany nudged the scales in favor of war by a delivery of gold to an empire that was exhausted by war and was deeply in debt to the bankers of Europe.

Ottoman goals during the First World War were different from those of the Germans. Their primary objective was to forestall Russian ambitions on Anatolia. A secondary objective was to recover the territories in the Balkans lost during the Balkan War of 1913. The Germans initially encouraged Turkish aims in the Balkans. But when many of the Balkan states opted for neutrality, the Germans pushed Turkey towards opening a second front against the Russians in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. A German-Turkish region of influence was established around Tabriz and the Germans tried to get Persia involved in the war against Russia. The Russians responded by occupying northern Persia. Great Britain was a nominal ally of Russia, but its long-term strategic interests dictated that the Russians be denied access to warm waters. Concerned that the Russians might break through to the Persian Gulf, a British-Indian force occupied Isfahan and southern Persia. During much of the Great War, Persia remained a country occupied by three contesting powers, Russia to the north, Britain to the south and German-Ottoman garrisons to the west.

From a Muslim perspective, the conduct of the Great War may be divided into three phases. The first phase, 1914-1916, was a stalemate with neither side scoring decisive victories. The second phase, 1916-1918, was marked



by Arab uprisings in the Hejaz and Syria and a methodical advance of the British-Indian armies to occupy the Arab provinces. Two other major events occurred towards the end of the war. The United States entered the war in April 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution took Russia out of the war in October 1917. Both events profoundly affected the course of the war. In the third phase, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered, Greece invaded Anatolia and was beaten back, Turkey became a republic and the Caliphate was abolished.

The first major engagement for the Ottomans occurred right at the outset of the war. The British naval secretary, Winston Churchill, ordered an assault on the Dardanelles. His strategy was to occupy the Straits, then move on to Istanbul and thus knock the Ottomans out of the war. In April 1915, a combined force of British, Australian and New Zealander troops, almost a million strong, landed on the western side of the Straits. The French tried similar landings on the eastern side of the Straits. A determined Ottoman resistance beat back the invading forces time and again. After an effort lasting more than nine months, the invading armies withdrew (January 1916), having suffered 213,980 casualties during this single campaign. It was here, in the Dardanelles campaigns, that Kemal Atatürk first distinguished himself.

The real threat to the Ottomans was from Russia to the northeast. The Armenians saw a golden opportunity in the war to drive the Turkish population out and establish an independent Armenian state in eastern Turkey. A systematic campaign of terror was initiated against the Turkish peasants before the Russian invasions. The Czar's armies advanced on a broad front taking the province of Kars and finally capturing Erzurum, Trebizond and Erzincan. The Armenians supported this push with massive propaganda against the Turks and the supply of war material. The Russians and the Armenians forced out the Turks from their homes in eastern Anatolia and tens of thousands were slaughtered as they sought to flee the Russian advance. The Ottomans finally established a defense line west of Erzurum under the leadership of Ahmed Izzet Pasha and stabilized the front. In retaliation, 200,000 Armenians were expelled and a large number of them perished.

All parties to the conflict used religion to further their national interests. The Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Caliph, declared a jihad on England,

France and Russia, expecting support from the Turkomans in Central Asia and the Muslims in India. The British in India were particularly vulnerable. India, with a population of over 300 million at the beginning of the war, provided the empire with a vast pool of manpower. The Indian army, one million strong, was extensively used in Iraq, Egypt, North Africa, Palestine and Syria. It was recruited primarily from the regions between Delhi and Peshawar and had a strong Muslim component. The British similarly recruited a large number of Egyptians for their war effort, while the French did the same in Algeria. For the first time in modern history, a large number of Muslim soldiers were faced with a dilemma, either to fight fellow Muslims while serving in the armed forces of a colonial (nominally Christian) power, or to refuse to do so. The British successfully combated the Ottoman call to jihad in India and Egypt and the Ottomans were only partially successful in neutralizing the Muslims in India. In more than one campaign in Iraq, Indian Muslim troops fired over the heads of defending Ottoman troops to avoid killing fellow Muslims. The Russians achieved similar results in Central Asia, through both propaganda and force.

On the Iraqi front, a British-Indian force entered the Shatt al Arab in November 1914 and occupied Basra. Ottoman resistance was determined. In November 1915, the Ottomans smashed the British forces near Baghdad, cut off their supply lines from Basra and sent them reeling back towards the Persian Gulf. On the Egyptian front, a strong force of 80,000 Ottoman soldiers moved south from Syria towards the Suez Canal. British resistance was stiff and a stalemate developed around the Suez Canal area, which lasted until the summer of 1916.

With the military lines grinding to a halt on all fronts, the focus shifted to the propaganda war and in this sphere the Entente Powers had an advantage. The Ottoman Empire contained within it a large number of national and religious minorities who could be incited against the Porte in Istanbul. The Balkan caldron had led to the onset of hostilities. The Armenians were sandwiched between the Russians and the Turks. Now the focus shifted to the Middle East. The Arabs in peninsular Arabia were restive and impressionable. Palestine evoked deep emotions among Muslims, Christians and Jews. Lebanon had a large Maronite community. These were materials tailor-made for a propaganda war. British intelligence was particularly active in this area. Three major agreements signed during

the period 1916-1918 not only changed the course of the Great War but had a major impact on historical developments in West Asia in the latter half of the 20th century. The first, between Henry McMahon of Britain and Sharif Hussain of Hejaz, enlisted the support of the latter for the British war efforts in return for a promise to set up an independent Arab state. The second, between Great Britain and Emir Abdulaziz Ibn Saud entailed a subsidy by the British to the latter in return for a promise not to attack Sharif Hussain in Hejaz. The third, between the British and world Zionist leaders, to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine led to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Needless to say, there were glaring contradictions in these promises and declarations.

The Entente Powers reached secret agreements among themselves to divide up the Ottoman provinces at the termination of hostilities. The most notorious of these, the Sykes-Picot agreement (May 16, 1916), gave Egypt, Iraq and Palestine to the British. The French were promised Syria and Lebanon. The Straits as well as Istanbul were promised to the Russians along with the provinces of eastern Anatolia. Anatolia itself was to be partitioned between the Russians, British, French, Italians, Greeks and Armenians. Similarly, Persia was to be partitioned into a northern Russian zone and a southern British zone. Thus were sown the seeds of strife that were to drive a wedge between the Turks and the Arabs, destroy the historical good relations between Muslims and Jews and haunt West Asia throughout the rest of the 20th century.

Meanwhile, a combination of internal sabotage and a mobilization of the British Empire gave the British an advantage. By October 1916, the Arab revolt was in full swing, aided and abetted by British intelligence officers such as T.E. Lawrence, which changed the course of the war. Sharif Hussain, believing that the Entente Powers would indeed honor their pledge to create an Arab state under him, organized guerrilla attacks on Ottoman garrisons. His commandos successfully destroyed the Hejaz railway and overran the cities of Mecca and Jeddah. Hundreds of Ottoman soldiers were killed in the desert. The Ottoman garrison at Madina was surrounded while that in Yemen, at the entrance to the Red Sea, was isolated.

The enormous advantage enjoyed by the British Empire in manpower and material began to have its effect. In December 1916, the British attacked on two fronts. British-Indian armies advanced along the Shatt al

Arab while another front was opened through the Sinai towards Palestine. By the summer of 1917, British forces had occupied Baghdad and were advancing towards Mosul in northern Iraq. Ottoman resistance was weak, as most of the Ottoman forces had been diverted to northwestern Persia to support German ambitions in the oil fields of Azerbaijan.

The British advance on Palestine was even more ominous. Moving methodically, building a railroad as they went to keep their forces supplied through the Sinai desert, the British took Gaza, Accra, Jaffa and Ramallah. The Ottomans valiantly defended Jerusalem but the city fell, under repeated assaults, on December 9, 1917. The French landed on the coast of Lebanon and took control of Beirut. Allenby continued his march through Syria. The Arab nationalists in Damascus rebelled and the Ottoman forces were withdrawn from that city. As he led the victorious British-Indian forces past the tomb of Salahuddin, Allenby is reported to have stopped, tapped his shoes and said: "We are here! We are here!" The Crusader dream had finally come true!

Even as late as the summer of 1916 it was not obvious who would win the war. The Ottomans had successfully beaten back the British-Indian armies in Iraq and Egypt and had stopped the Russian advance in eastern Anatolia. The western front between Germany and France was a stalemate with trench warfare exacting its toll on all sides. German submarines were taking a heavy toll on Trans-Atlantic shipping. The rate of tonnage sunk was just about equal to the Allied capacity to replace it.

American entry into the war was not inevitable. The United States had strong ethnic ties both with England and Germany and, initially, provided credit and material to both sides. The loss of American shipments to Great Britain was of concern to the Americans but Woodrow Wilson was reluctant to get involved in a European conflict. However, as the stalemate continued and the war took its toll, there was increasing concern in the financial community of New York that if Germany were to win the War, Britain might not be able to pay back her war debts. This fear tilted the scales in favor of the interventionists. Public opinion in the United States was prepared and President Wilson finally entered the War as an ally of the Entente Powers in April 1917. The Ottomans, however, never formally declared war on the United States.

Meanwhile, Russia exploded. It had entered the war first to help Serbia and had expanded its operations on the Polish front to divert the Germans pressing in on Paris. Except in northeastern Anatolia, the Russians paid a heavy price in war casualties, suffering major reverses at the Battle of Tannenberg (August 1914) and during successive thrusts at Poland in August 1916 and April 1917. The war caused major shortages and the Russian economy was in a shambles. The peasants starved while the aristocrats in Moscow reveled in their luxuries. This was an explosive social political mixture, ready for ignition. In April 1917 the Germans released the Bolshevik leader Lenin to Russia, hoping to increase pressure on the Czar to pull out of the war. Lenin called for an end to hostilities and the establishment of a Soviet Republic embracing all the nationalists of the czarist empire. After the defeat of April 1917 on the western front, the Russian army began to collapse. The Revolution followed in October 1917 and it sealed the fate of the Czar. In November 1917 the Bolsheviks came to power. The Allies, alarmed at the prospect of a peasant revolution sweeping through Eurasia, intervened and offered assistance to the “White Russians” fighting the Bolsheviks. The British, French, Japanese and Americans alike landed their troops in Russia but were ultimately expelled by the victorious Bolsheviks.

The Russian Revolution was a major turning point in the history of the Great War. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 removed the Russian threat to Anatolia from the east. On December 5, 1917, the Russians entered into a treaty with the Ottomans, renouncing all claims to Ottoman territory. It is conceivable that the Russians would have successfully overrun eastern Anatolia and western Iran if their armies had not dissolved in the chaos of the Revolution. Once they were out of the war, the Russians made public the secret provisions of the Sykes-Picot agreements splitting up the Ottoman Empire between the European powers. This caused some embarrassment to the British in the eyes of their Arab clients. But it was too late, because by now the United States had entered the war and was supporting the war efforts of the Entente powers and the tide of the war had turned.

With the resources of the United States, the war of attrition in Europe tilted to the advantage of France while the British successfully completed their invasions of Syria and Iraq. Both Germany and the Ottomans were

financially broke and the collapse of the Central Powers came quickly in the summer of 1918. The Ottomans made overtures for peace through President Wilson, believing that his 14-point program would apply to Turkey. When no reply came, the Ottomans had no choice but to accept an unconditional surrender. The British won the right to occupy Istanbul and the Straits. The Italians landed in southern Turkey. The French extended their zone from Syria into southern Anatolia while the British took all of the Kurdish areas in southeastern Anatolia. Turkey was left with a small area around Ankara.

The terms of the Armistice were exceedingly harsh. Turkey was to dismantle its armed forces except for a lightly armed force of 50,000. The administration and finance were to be under the direction of officers of the victorious powers. Discrimination against Muslims became an accepted norm. Only Christians were allowed to attend state schools. Christian missionaries were put in charge of Muslim orphanages where Turkish children were openly converted to Christianity. Police forces were put under the direction of Greek and Armenian officers who promptly butchered a large number of recently discharged Turkish soldiers while the victorious forces not only looked the other way but also condoned such practices.

The British and the French desired nothing less than the total dismemberment of the Empire and the subjugation of Arab and Turk alike. Even before the Ottoman surrender, it was obvious that the promises made to the Arabs were only a ruse. At the London Conference in 1919, Sharif Hussain was not even invited to attend and only the last minute intervention of the British foreign office enabled him to sit in as an observer. The occupation of Arab lands was total and complete. The sacred sites in Jerusalem as well as the oil wealth of the Persian Gulf were entirely at the disposal of Europe.

One of the strategic goals of Britain and France was to destroy the Caliphate. This institution, established by the Companions of the Prophet to provide historical continuity to Islam, had survived 1300 years of turbulent Islamic history. Not even the savagery of the Mongols could extirpate it. The Caliphate had moved from Madina to Damascus (662), from Damascus to Baghdad (751), from Baghdad to Cairo (1262) and from Cairo to Istanbul (1517). Even when its influence was at a low ebb, it was the universally accepted hinge around which Islamic politics revolved. In Istanbul it had proved to be a binding institution for the Ottoman Empire uniting the Turks,

Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, Bosnians, Berbers, Egyptians and the Sudanese into a universal community. The victorious European powers were quite aware that with the Caliphate, the Muslims were a unitary force. Take the Caliphate away and what is left is a plethora of nationalities, each jockeying for power and position.

The attempts to terminate the Caliphate brought a worldwide reaction. In India, the Caliphate Movement was born. Its stated goal was to put pressure on Great Britain not to adopt a policy that would remove the Caliphate. The Movement gained the support of Indian national leaders, including Gandhi and it continued until the Turks themselves decided to dissolve the institution.

Turkish resistance to the occupation began almost immediately after the Armistice. All strata of Turkish society, from the poor peasants to the bureaucrats—and the Sultan himself—contributed to the resistance either covertly or overtly. Societies for the Defense of Turkish Rights sprang up in the areas directly under foreign occupation. At first they tried to convince the occupation forces of their human rights. When this proved futile, armed resistance ensued. The “Societies” rapidly coalesced into the “National Forces” and received direct support from the nationalist government in Ankara. Men and material were smuggled under cover of night from the independent zone to the occupation zones. At first the nationalists received material support from the Bolsheviks in Russia who hoped that the turmoil in Anatolia provided them with a golden opportunity to foster communist rule in Turkey. The nationalists played the Bolshevik card very adroitly, receiving arms for the Turkish War of Independence, but keeping the communists at arms length.

It was the Greek invasion that galvanized the Turks and determined the shape of post-war Turkey. The Greeks had always coveted Ottoman territories and they saw an historic opportunity to grab what they could. The Western powers connived with the Greeks. On May 14, 1919, a flotilla of British, French and American ships landed a division of Greek troops in Izmir. The city was turned over to the invaders and a general massacre of the Turks followed. From Izmir, the

Greeks moved towards Bursa, raping and killing as they went. The local Greek population joined in the mass pillage.

At critical moments, history throws up strong personalities, who bend the flow of history by the sheer power of their will. Mustafa Kemal was one such man. Although considered controversial by many Muslims because of his secular leanings and his part in the dissolution of the Caliphate, there is no question that he was the one leader to whom the Turkish nation turned in the hour of its need.

Born into a poor family in Thrace, Kemal showed unusual capabilities as a young man, attended the officer's academy in Istanbul and distinguished himself in military service in Libya and Syria. This was a difficult time for the Turks. The Empire was in shambles and the Turks were searching for new modalities for their changed relationship with the world. The idea of a Turkish nation, shorn of its attachments to Arabs and other non-Turkish peoples, was gathering momentum. Two separate centers of power sprang up in Anatolia, one based in Istanbul around the Sultan-Caliph, the other based in Ankara around a national parliament. The British openly encouraged disaffected groups to wage armed warfare on the nationalists. The Soviets, while supporting the nationalists, had their own agenda. Against this background, Kemal was trying to organize an army to repel the invaders. Representations were made to Moscow, which was more than willing to help with arms, hoping that in the process Turkey would join the Communist camp.

On June 19, 1919, Kemal met with leaders of the resistance movement at Amasya and drafted a protocol for a National Resistance Movement, which declared that the Turkish fatherland was in danger and it was the movement's goal to rid the country of all foreign forces. At this stage, Kemal and his supporters were still in support of the Sultan-Caliph. The position of the Istanbul government was less equivocal about the nationalists. Considering that Istanbul was under occupation, the grand vizier and the Sultan were scarcely in a position to openly take an independent position, maintaining instead that the future of the Turkish nation lay in cooperation with the occupation forces. Their actions, however, showed great sympathies for the nationalists.

Indeed, when Ali Reza Pasha became the Grand Vizier in October 1919, he negotiated with the nationalists a protocol reaffirming that no Muslim province of Anatolia would be ceded to the enemy. The British would not tolerate such cooperation. They pressured the Istanbul government to



condemn the nationalist movement. Many of the national deputies were arrested and extradited to Malta.

In August 1920, the Treaty of Sevres was imposed on the Istanbul government. The Treaty gave all of Thrace to Greece right up to the gates of Istanbul. The districts of Izmir and Bursa were also left under Greek administration. The Turkish army was to be disbanded. What remained of Turkey would be under the financial and military control of the invading powers. The nationalists in Ankara rejected the treaty. To them it was another indication that the Sultan was not a free agent and could not be entrusted with the affairs of the nation.

The Greeks began a general offensive in June 1920 to capture more territory. Alashehir, Bahkesir, Bandirma and Bursa fell one after the other. In October 1920, a second offensive began. Simultaneously, the Armenians went on a rampage in eastern Turkey, advancing as far as Erzurum. The Turkish forces first contained the Armenian advance and pushed them back beyond the old Ottoman borders. The Armenians sued for peace. Meanwhile, Turkish resistance forces made their stand against the Greeks at the Inonu River under the leadership of Ismet Inunu. The Greek invaders were beaten and started to retreat. Seeing the strength of the nationalist movement, the Entente Powers tried the diplomatic trap. A conference in London held in March 1921 tried to coax the Ankara government to agree with the Istanbul government. But by now the break between Istanbul and Ankara was complete. The nationalist representatives would not even talk to the Istanbuli representatives.

It was in London that the nationalists achieved their first diplomatic victory. France backed out of the capitulation agreements, soon followed by the Soviets (March 1921). The Italians had no stomach for fighting. But the Greeks had not given up yet. After the London conference, they tried again, this time with superior forces. Their offensive carried them all the way to the gates of Ankara. The battle raged at the Sakarya River. Finally, on September 2, 1922, the Turks broke through and sent the Greek armies reeling towards Izmir. Athens tried to keep Izmir through diplomacy, using Britain as an intermediary. But Kemal would have nothing of it. The Greek enemy was pursued and by September 18, 1922, the invading Greeks had either been destroyed or chased back across the Aegean Sea. Kemal

surrounded the occupying British forces in the Straits and forced them to withdraw. The Turks had won their war of independence.

The internal situation in Turkey was far from stable. The National Resistance Movement had represented all elements of society—from left wing communists to right wing ulema. But the cooperation of the Sultan-Caliph Vaheeduddin with the British during the Turkish war of independence had destroyed whatever trust existed between the nationalists and the Sultanate. In October 1922 Vaheeduddin, cognizant of his untenable position, fled Istanbul on a British destroyer. Abdul Majid II was chosen as the next Caliph. When those opposed to the nationalists congregated around the Caliph and tried to destabilize the nationalists, the Turkish National Assembly responded by abolishing the Caliphate on March 3, 1924. The Islamic world was shocked. Protests came from all over the world. But it was too late. The experience of the First World War had taught the Turks that the Caliphate was a burden they could no longer carry and they decided to abandon it.

Thus it was that in the 20th century, the Caliphate, an institution that had survived 1300 years of turbulent history, was betrayed by the Muslims themselves and was finally abolished.

# MARGINALIZATION OF THE MUSLIMS- A BRIEF REVIEW

## *Summary*

*In the competition for the world's resources, the verdict of history is without mercy. In the "winner-take-all" rules of global competition, civilizations with the most efficient institutions win out. By the end of the 17th century, it was apparent that the tide of history was flowing in favor of Europe and away from the Islamic world. Neither was the failure exclusively Islamic. With its singular focus on wealth and power, Europe elbowed out the Muslims in trade and commerce and as opportunities developed, moved to dominate not just the world of Islam, but the entire globe. This was a civilizational avalanche in which a Eurocentric civilization, emerging out of northern Europe, overwhelmed the ancient civilizations of Asia, Africa and the Americas. The Muslims lost the race primarily because their institutions could not compete with those of Europe. The Joint Stock Companies that emerged from Europe proved to be far more efficient in harnessing the energies of men and material and exploiting historical opportunities than the despotic bureaucracies in Asia and Africa.*

*There were other reasons as well. These included legitimacy of rule, absence of an orderly chain of succession, excessive infighting, a fatal weakness in naval technology, loss of trade, social rigidity and parochial religious zeal. Over-arching it all was a general decay in spirituality and ethics, which provide the essential binding force for a civilization.*

## **Marginalization of the Muslims**

When Islam burst upon the global scene in the 7th century, it faced the Christian (Byzantine, Eastern Roman) Empire in the Mediterranean and the Sassanid Empire in Persia. The campaigns of Caliph Omar Ibn al Khattab eliminated the Sassanids, the Persians embraced Islam, and Persia became a part of the Islamic heartland. In the Mediterranean, the Roman provinces of Syria and Egypt were conquered. Expansion continued during the Umayyad period. An attack on the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (Istanbul) by Emir Muawiya (d. 680) was unsuccessful. Success was more forthcoming in the western campaigns. By 712, North Africa and Spain were in the Muslim camp. Muslim armies crossed the Pyrenees Mountains (715), consolidated their hold on southern France (715-730), and pushed north into the heart of the Frankish territories. They were stopped at the Battle of Tours (736) near modern Paris. Thus, the first wave of Muslim expansion succeeded in elbowing out the Byzantine Empire from the eastern Mediterranean and almost succeeded in overrunning the Latin West.

The second wave of expansion came in the 9th century. After the death of Charlemagne (814) and the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire, a political vacuum developed in northern Europe that invited raids from the Vikings (Swedes). The Nordic countries were not yet Christian, and the Viking raids took a heavy toll in Germany, France and Scotland. At about the same time, the Umayyads in Spain and the Aghlabids in Tunisia launched a series of raids on southern Europe.

The Spanish Umayyads reoccupied Narbonne and made a thrust towards the mountain passes in Switzerland. The Aghlabids captured Sicily and advancing into the Italian peninsula, occupied Pisa and raided Rome (846). The Muslim powers might have inflicted greater damage were they not divided among themselves. The Umayyads of Spain would not coordinate their efforts with the Aghlabids of North Africa who owed their allegiance to the Abbasids in Baghdad. In the 10th century, the powerful Fatimids in

Egypt (969-1172) displaced the Aghlabids. The Fatimids had a different vision of Islam from the Sunnis and engaged in a continuous struggle with both the Umayyads in Spain and the Abbasids in Baghdad. These internal struggles dashed any hope of a coordinated, sustained offensive against southern Europe.

The first Latin thrust at the world of Islam came during the Crusades. The Crusades were proposed by Pope Gregory V as early as 996, but the Europe of Pope Gregory was too weak, and the Islamic world much too strong to mount a major attack across the Mediterranean Sea. The initial focus of the Crusades was therefore limited to southern Italy and Spain. Pisa and Sardinia were recaptured in 1052, while the city of Toledo in Spain fell in 1085. However, it was not until the 11th century that the full fury of the Crusades was let loose.

In 1095, Pope Urban preached a Crusade to wrest control of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The imagination of Europe was fired up with visions of the Holy Cross and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This time, the political climate in the eastern Mediterranean was more conducive to an invasion. The long drawn out struggle between the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Fatimids in Cairo had sapped their energies. The line of control between the Seljuk Turks who championed the Abbasids and the Fatimids ran through the hills of Palestine. The First Crusade succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and establishing a Latin presence in Palestine and Syria (1096). However, the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem was short-lived. A counter-punch by the Seljuks (1130-1170) expelled the Crusaders from northern Iraq. Salahuddin (d. 1193) united Syria and Egypt under his command, brought an end to Fatimid rule in Cairo (1172) and won back Jerusalem (1186) from the Crusaders.

The first Latin drive into the eastern Mediterranean was a military failure, but it did bring the Crusaders face to face with the more advanced Islamic civilization. Soon, the focus of the Crusades in the eastern Mediterranean changed from God to gold. With the Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople (1204), the Latin West accepted the premise that gold was more important than the Cross and moved inexorably away from the age of imagination towards the age of mercantile acquisition.

Subsequent forays by the Latins to occupy Egypt (1218) ended in failure and their attempts to form a coalition with the marauding Mongols (1260)

were equally unsuccessful. The finale came when Sultan Baybars of Egypt defeated a combined army of the Crusaders, Armenians and Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut (1261), near the city of Nazareth. However, it was in the Maghrib that the real drama of the Crusades was played out. It was the western Crusades, fought in Spain and North Africa, which altered the flow of global history and ultimately resulted in the ascendancy of Europe over the rest of the world.

Frustrated in the east, the Crusaders turned their full fury at the Maghrib. After the Battle of Hittin (1186) and the failure of the Third Crusade (1193), no serious attempt was made by the Latins to retake Jerusalem. It was a different story in the west. The Second Crusade (1145) succeeded in capturing Lisbon (Hishbunah in Arabic) in Portugal, while Sicily was wrested from the Arabs (1050). The intervention of the Murabitun from West Africa (1086), and of the Al Muhaddith from North Africa (1125) stemmed the Crusader tide for a while. But the disastrous defeat at Las Novas de Tolosa (1212) sealed the fate of the Al Muhaddith Empire and the Christian Crusaders thrust forward. Spain, except for a tiny foothold in Granada, fell to a combined onslaught from Portugal, Castile and Aragon (1232-1248).

For the next hundred years, a military equilibrium prevailed in the western Mediterranean. Hostilities resumed in the 15th century as pressure from the Turks in the eastern Mediterranean increased. In 1415, Portugal captured the important trading post of Ceuta astride the Straits of Gibraltar. This was the first significant hold of the Christian Iberians in North Africa. Tangier fell in 1425. Using these two cities as their bases, the Portuguese expanded their operations on the

Atlantic coast of Morocco. Prince Henry, Portuguese governor of Ceuta and Tangier, encouraged these excursions. Since the Maghrib was in political disarray following the collapse of the Al Muhaddith, it was in no position to mount a vigorous counter-offensive. In 1434, the Portuguese sailor Diaz crossed Cape Bajador at the western tip of Africa. This was an important benchmark in that it demonstrated Portuguese capability to sail against the wind. In 1441, the first Portuguese slave raid was made on the coast of Mauritania, in which a “Moorish” couple was captured and enslaved. This was the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, which in the

coming centuries was to transform Africa, Europe and America alike. By the year 1500, there were 30,000 Muslim slaves in Lisbon.

The Portuguese continued their relentless advance down the coast of West Africa. Gaining experience as they went, Portuguese sailors soon discovered that by sailing further west to the Azores Islands and then turning south, they could avoid the opposing currents off the coast of Africa. By 1490, their ships were sailing far into the southern reaches of the great continent of Africa. The farther south they went, the larger was the radius of the arc extending from the Azores to the tip of South Africa. In 1492, during one of those voyages, in an arc that extended far from the shores of Africa, Columbus discovered the West Indies. Granada fell the same year to a determined Castilian onslaught. In 1494, at the Treaty of Tordesillas brokered by Pope Alexander VI, Portugal and Spain divided the world into their respective spheres of influence. In 1496, Vasco de Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa, up the coast of East Africa and with the help of a Muslim navigator, Ahmed Ibn Majid, was shown the sea-route to India. Thus the naval thrusts that had started a century earlier to outflank the Muslim Maghrib resulted in the discovery of America and the establishment of naval trade routes to the prosperous Indian Ocean region.

But these discoveries in themselves were not sufficient to guarantee the ascent of Europe. While the Iberians were exploring the coast of West Africa, the Ottoman Turks, rising from the dust of Tatar destructions, started a broad offensive in southeastern Europe. This was the third major offensive of the Muslims towards Europe. The Turks were fierce, determined, had the zeal of the ghazis and were more than a match for Europe in military technology. In 1453, Constantinople (Istanbul) was captured and was made the capital of the expanding empire. By the turn of the century, Turkish cavalry was riding on the plains of Hungary and was knocking at the doors of Vienna, deep in Central Europe. When the Ottomans captured Egypt in 1517, they projected their naval power into the Mediterranean, while their land armies pushed across North Africa, expelling the Spanish who had established their bases along the southern Mediterranean coast. Meanwhile, the powerful Safavids in Persia and the resplendent Moghuls in India were consolidating their empires. To an observer in 1570, it would not be obvious as to whether it would be the

Christian Iberians or the Muslim Turks who would conquer and dominate the world.

It was in the last third of the 16th century that the focus of history shifted to northern Europe. The confluence of several critical events helped the North Europeans in their emergence on the world stage. In 1571, the Battle of Lepanto contained the expansion of the Ottoman navy and prevented the Turks from projecting their power into the Atlantic Ocean and the Americas. In 1578 the Moroccans, under Sultan Ahmed al Mansur, crushed the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir and with it the curtain fell on the Portuguese global venture. Sebastian, the King of Portugal, was killed and within two years after the debacle Portugal itself became a protectorate of Spain. In turn, Spain tried to leverage its position as the colonial power in the Americas to solidify its global naval supremacy. In this effort it was doomed to failure.

The lure of Incan gold from Peru and Aztec silver from Mexico, hauled aboard Spanish ships, was too strong a temptation for English, French and North African pirates. Spain tried diplomacy to stop the piracy but to no avail. In desperation, King Phillip III of Spain attempted an invasion of England. With the combined resources of Spain and Portugal, the Spanish armada sailed towards London. The invasion had the blessing of the Pope who declared a Crusade against England because Queen Elizabeth I (d. 1603) had taken England out of the orbit of Rome and had joined the Protestant League. The planned invasion was a disaster. The Spanish armada was sunk in the English Channel in 1588. The pride of the Spanish and Portuguese navies went down to the bottom of the sea and with it died the Spanish dream of dominating the world.

Meanwhile, a new naval power emerged in northern Europe. Holland, which had been a colony of Spain, threw off the Spanish yoke in 1572 and declared its independence. Antwerp and Rotterdam were important trading and shipbuilding centers for Spain and Portugal. When they wrested their independence, the Dutch inherited not only these trading posts but acquired the shipbuilding docks as well. Following the unsuccessful Spanish attempts to invade England (1588 and 1598), the weakness of Spanish naval power led to increased piracy against its shipping. As piracy took its toll, Spain was forced to increase the rate of production of its ships to replenish its vast fleet. Quality suffered. By contrast, the Dutch focused on improving



the range as well as the firepower of their ships. Holland had, in addition, large resources of timber from the Rhineland and a vast reservoir of German mercenaries to draw upon from the northern counties. A weakened Spain, overextended across the globe, could not defend its positions as well as those of its Portuguese allies. By 1620, the Dutch had occupied Brazil, displaced the Portuguese as the dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean and replaced the Spanish as the most important European power engaged in the African slave trade.

From the vantage point of the year 1600, a historian may see a window of opportunity in North Africa and Western Europe. Portugal was defeated and had become a protectorate of Spain. The Spaniards, their ambitions frustrated in North Africa and England, could not defend their far-flung possessions. The Dutch and the English fleets were still in their infancy. This was an ideal opportunity for the Maghrib to venture forth and compete for the wealth that lay beyond the oceans. But it was not to be. North Africa surrendered the Atlantic Ocean to the Europeans. The wheels of fortune turned. Wealth and power gravitated towards northern Europe and left Africa in poverty.

These developments were a logical consequence of the political fragmentation that existed in North Africa in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Ottomans advanced from Egypt to control Tunisia and Algeria (1572), but halted their advance when the Sa'adids of Morocco showed their military prowess against the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578). In Morocco itself, there was tension between the rulers and the society. Real power in the countryside lay with the Jazuli (belonging to the Shadhuli order) sufis and the Sa'adid emirs ruled only with the support of the Jazuli shaykhs. Unlike the emirs, the Jazulis had roots in the countryside. They organized local schools around zawiyas, provided social services and spearheaded the resistance to Portuguese incursions in southern Morocco and Mauritania. The money required to support these activities came from ziyara, a charitable contribution offered by the faithful to the local zawiyas, which were often built around tombs of sufi shaykhs. By the same token, this was money denied the Sultans and emirs. Sources of revenue from the Mediterranean were equally elusive for the central administration. Much of the trade in the western Mediterranean was controlled by Genoa, Italy. The interests of the Moroccan merchants were

therefore more closely allied with those of the Italian merchants than with the Sa'adid emirs in Marrakesh. In addition, there were profits from piracy, but the capital for this activity was controlled from abroad, primarily from Italy and France. The Sa'adids were therefore perennially short of cash and became increasingly coercive in their tax collection.

It was the pressure of an empty treasury that drove the Sa'adid Emir, Ahmed al Mansur to his ill-fated invasion of the Songhay Empire in West Africa (1592). Although the emir obtained a substantial amount of loot from this adventure, the long-term effect of the invasion was to disrupt the north-south trade between the Sudan and North Africa, further hastening the disintegration of both. In turn, the resulting dislocations helped the African slave trade, which was at this time gaining momentum in the Sene-Gambia region on the Atlantic shores.

The Jazuli sufi movement, like its sister movements in Asia, was inherently anti-central, focusing more on individual salvation and the welfare of the local community, as opposed to a centralized administration. Only a centralized power could have mustered the capital to invest in a strong navy capable of competing with European navies. The

Sultans of Marrakesh, perennially short of cash, could not afford such major investments. The only Muslim power that did have the resources, namely the Ottoman Empire, was precluded from doing so by the emergence of an independent Morocco. The Spanish emperors, from Charles V (d. 1558) onwards, recognized that an independent Morocco was a useful bulwark against Ottoman expansion and did everything in their power to encourage this independence. The Turkish navy had no bases on the Atlantic Ocean. As a result, the Atlantic became an exclusive preserve of the European powers, and America an extension of Europe.

The tension between the rulers and the society had disastrous long-term effects on the development of trade and technology in the Maghrib. What was good for the society was not necessarily good for the emirs and vice versa. The emirs and Sultans had nothing to gain from any improvement, which would help either the Jazuli shaykhs, or the rich merchants along the Mediterranean coast. For instance, cultivation of sugarcane, which had been introduced into Morocco around 1570, was abandoned because the primary beneficiaries of this cultivation were the sufi zawiyas. Even though there was a ready market for Moroccan sugar in Elizabethan England, the Sa'adid

emirs saw no advantage in furthering this trade. Similarly, profits that were made by a few merchants on the Mediterranean coast benefited neither the emirs nor the society at large. A few merchants became wealthy from the trade but it did not help the consolidation of political power in the Maghrib or provide a channel for the energies of the masses in the direction of the increasingly important Atlantic Ocean.

In contrast to the accelerating social and political fragmentation in the Maghrib, England went through a political consolidation under the stimulus of similar impulses. English pirates were equally active against Spanish and Portuguese shipping. However, the impact of piracy was to hasten the demise of feudalism in England. Rich merchants, noblemen, even the crown, invested in this trade and benefited from its profits. The infusion of wealth created a new class whose interests lay more in the ships that plowed the Atlantic Ocean than in exploiting the land. As the newly rich made a bid for power, there was resistance from the established feudal lords. Tensions developed between the city and the countryside. Bold forays were made in the Parliament by both sides. After Oliver Cromwell (d. 1658), the debate between the trader and the landlord was decided in favor of the former and power shifted inexorably in favor of the merchants.

The key difference between the experience of England and the Muslim Maghrib lay in the process by which change was internalized and incorporated into the historical experience of the people. In the Maghrib, trade was external to the masses. It benefited neither the rulers nor the peasants. In England, trade became a part of the national experience; change was internalized and became a catalyst for social transformation. Out of the conflicts between the old feudal structure and the new mercantile order emerged a dynamic England that provided a mechanism to channel the energies of the people, and the ocean became the new frontier for the crowded masses in London and Liverpool. Within a century after Elizabeth I (d. 1603), the English navy emerged as the most powerful in the world. In the Maghrib, change was resisted and discarded because it was of marginal benefit to the rulers. The result was that the Maghrib itself became marginalized.

The principal element in this divergence lay in the legitimacy of rule. The Sa'adid emirs, like their counterparts in much of the Islamic world, were absolute monarchs. The interests of the masses were not always the same as

those of the rulers. The masses were more in tune with the sufis and their life revolved around the Jazuli zawiyas. The only contact that the peasant had with the ruler was through the hated tax collectors. The emirs in Marrakesh would not and did not encourage commercial or industrial activities that would further benefit the zawiyas from which the emirs themselves derived no benefit. There was a similar divergence of interests between the emirs and the merchants on the Mediterranean coast. The merchants benefited from the trade and their interests lay in working closely with the Christian Genoese. The benefits did not trickle down to the Berbers in the Atlas Mountains. By contrast, the political processes in England underwent a transformation in the 17th century, accommodating change and giving the merchant and the landowner alike a stake in how the country was governed. The monarchy itself was transformed, reflecting a desire to be more responsive to the emerging merchant classes.

*The political and social patterns in the Maghrib around the year 1600 offer insights into the process of decay that overwhelmed the Islamic world a century later. It is instructive to note that the political collapse that engulfed the Islamic world around the year 1700 was global, rather than regional. The Moghul, Safavid and the Ottoman dynasties suffered significant regression almost simultaneously. This suggests that the reasons for the loss of Muslim political initiative in world affairs were not regional; they were global. Regional analyses distort the perspective and provide only partial answers. The issue demands a global perspective.*

Legitimacy of rule was an important reason in this political collapse. Indeed, legitimacy of rule has been a recurrent theme in Islamic history since its inception. Differences of opinion regarding rules of succession and the qualifications of a ruler arose immediately after the death of the Prophet. The Ansars felt that they had an equal right with the Muhajirs to rule and demanded a dual power structure at the top. Dissension was contained and the issue was settled with the timely intervention of Abu Bakr and Omar ibn al Khattab and the Caliphate was established. The opinion that Ali ibn Abu Talib was the true heir to the leadership of the community also surfaced immediately but remained submerged until the assassination of the third Caliph, Uthman bin Affan. Uthman's assassination destroyed the unity in the Madinite community and civil war erupted when Ali ibn Abu Talib was elected the Caliph. The war and the aftermath of Ali's assassination

destroyed whatever cohesion was left and created the Shi'a-Sunni split, which runs through Islamic history like a giant earthquake fault. Only now, under the over-arching pressure of Western civilization is this giant fault being healed.

The first four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali, are considered the Khulafa e Rashidoon (Rightly Guided Caliphs) by Sunni Muslims. Most Shi'a Muslims accept only the Caliphate (and Imamate) of Ali, although some (such as the Zaidis and the Ibadis) accept the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and Omar but not that of Uthman. Nonetheless, there is agreement amongst an overwhelming majority of Muslims that the early Caliphate followed the principle of consultation and its legitimacy was accepted and supported by the community. Ali himself acted as the spiritual pole of the Islamic community during the rule of the first three caliphs and the difficult judicial issues were referred to him for his advice.

Only a legitimate ruler can command the willing support and cooperation that is necessary for just rule. Conversely, in the absence of legitimacy a ruler can enforce his writ only by coercion or bribery. Emir Muawiya changed the Caliphate. When he nominated and forced his son Yazid upon the community, the Caliphate became a dynasty. Its character was now closer to the Persian and Byzantine models than the one accepted by the Companions of the Prophet. Alone among the Umayyads, Omar Abdul Aziz (d. 719) tried to stem the tide towards autocracy, attempted to heal the wounds in the Islamic community and ruled with the consent of all segments of the society. For this reason, some refer to him as the Fifth Rightly Guided Caliph. When the Umayyads were displaced and the Abbasids moved their capital to Baghdad (762), the Caliphate underwent further changes and became more Persianized. In the 9th century, the Turks became the kingmakers in Baghdad and without abolishing the Caliphate, replaced it with a new institution, the Sultanate. The caliphs remained as spiritual relics of the past, but the temporal power passed on to the Sultans. Even when they had lost their temporal power, the community recognized the right of the caliph to bestow legitimacy upon a ruler, and Asian Sultans and African emirs alike coveted the honor of recognition from Baghdad.

In the 10th century, a powerful challenge to the legitimacy of the Abbasid Caliphate arose from North Africa. The Fatimids, claiming their descent from Imam Ismail, the sixth in the lineage of Ali ibn Abu Talib, burst upon

the scene and quickly consolidated their rule over Egypt, Syria, Arabia and North Africa. In the Shi'a tradition, they maintained that only a qualified imam in the lineage of Ali could provide wilayat (guardianship) to the Islamic community. Despite their strong attempts to foster this opinion upon the Islamic world, they were unsuccessful and they remained a ruling elite amidst a preponderant Sunni population. In the 12th century, Salahuddin displaced them (1171) and titular legitimacy reverted to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad.

In 1258, Hulagu Khan destroyed Baghdad and with it the classic period of Islamic civilization came to an end. The community was without a spiritual head and a concerted effort was made to continue the institution of the Caliphate. One of the survivors from the Abbasid house, Al Mustansir, found his way to Cairo, where he was proclaimed the Caliph by the ruling Bahri Mamlukes (1261). And there the Caliphate stayed until the Ottomans captured Egypt in 1517. To maintain continuity, the last of the Abbasids, Al Mutawakkil III, was brought to Istanbul and was made to renounce his title in favor of the Ottoman Sultan Salim Yavuz. The Ottoman Caliphate continued in Istanbul until 1924, when the Turkish National Assembly abolished it.

In the 1400 years since the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the model of rule in the Islamic world has been that of a despot king who acquires his power through conquest, heredity or treachery. Some ruled as if they were saints, some were scoundrels, but the model of despotism was constant and unchanging. The ruling structure was an inverted pyramid standing on its tip. When a ruler was capable, his kingdom flourished. When he was not, the kingdom fell apart only to be occupied by a new king. As long as the ruling structure in Europe was similarly despotic, the Muslim empires stood an even chance to hold their own. Indeed their religious cohesion, self-confidence and doctrinal zeal gave the Muslims an advantage over other civilizations. But when the old political structure in Europe disappeared and new institutions evolved, the Muslim world was at a disadvantage. Thus it was when the English and Dutch joint stock companies squared off against the crumbling despotic regimes of Asia. It was the companies, with their superior efficiencies and decentralized management that triumphed.

In the year 1700, the principal Muslim dynasties in the world were all absolute monarchies. The triumphs and tribulations, the hopes and

disappointments, the successes and failures of a people depended entirely on the person of their monarch. His training and disposition, his religious inclination or lack thereof, his abilities and foibles all had a direct bearing on the empire. Neither were the rules of succession clearly defined. A reigning monarch could not be removed except through assassination, blinding, imprisonment or military defeat. In much of the Islamic world, the rules of succession followed the Mongol-Tatar-Turkish tradition and had nothing to do with the legacy of Islam. In this tradition, a kingdom was considered a joint property of all the princes. The death of a sovereign, or his illness, was a signal for a “winner take all” orgy of slaughter among the princes. For instance, in Moghul India, the illness of Shah Jehan in 1657 triggered a bloody struggle among his four sons. Dara Shikoh in the Punjab, Shuja in Bengal, Aurangzeb in the Deccan and Murad in Gujrat, each had his own partisans, and his own army. These four armies, totaling more than a million armed men, roamed the vast subcontinent, hunting each other out. When the dust settled, more than a hundred thousand young men had died, Aurangzeb emerged victorious. Shuja and Murad were killed. And the head of Dara Shikoh, the Crown Prince, was presented on a tray to the aging Emperor Shah Jehan. The fratricide left a legacy of bitterness from which the Moghul Empire never recovered.

The law of fratricide was applied with equal ruthlessness in the Ottoman Empire. When Mehmet III became the Sultan in 1595, he executed all of his nineteen brothers, leaving no claimant to the throne beside himself. When Mehmet died in 1603, he left two sons Ahmed, age 14, and Mustafa, age 12. Ahmed became the new Sultan, but the execution of Mustafa was stayed out of concern that if Ahmed were to die before he had a male heir, the Ottoman lineage would come to an end. Ahmed did have a son in 1604 but Mustafa was spared once again because infant mortality was high and the concern about a male heir remained. Instead, Mustafa was confined to the harem, there to spend his time among the eunuchs and the ladies. This was the first instance of the Ottomans not applying the law of fratricide.

The Mongol-Tatar-Turkish tradition of a contest of power between competing princes for the throne had its own ruthless logic. Faced with the prospects of mortal combat, the princes vied with each other to hone their battle skills and cultivate influence in the kingdom. The outcome, presumably, produced a prince most fit to rule. After Ahmed, a new

arrangement evolved whereby the throne went from brother to brother until all the brothers in a generation died and then the eldest surviving member of the next generation. Meanwhile, the princes were kept in the harem and had no opportunity to develop their administrative or military skills. Two consequences followed. The ascension of a new prince now became subject to the intrigues of the harem and the eunuchs. In addition, the rules of succession had no criteria of valor or merit built into them. The caliber of the Sultans suffered. As long as the empire was well served by the grand viziers and the centralized bureaucracy, the weakness at the helm of affairs was concealed. But when the Ottomans suffered their first major defeat at the second siege of Vienna (1683), an inexorable process of steady collapse began.

In Safavid Persia, when Shah Abbas I passed away in 1626, all of his brothers and most of his sons who would have a claim on the throne had been either blinded or executed. When no prince from amongst his own progeny was available, a grandson, Sa'am Mirza was crowned as Safi I. Abbas I, under whom the Safavid Empire reached its zenith, also instituted the practice of confining the princes in the harem. No opportunity was provided to a prospective monarch to learn the affairs of state through training as governor of a province or as commander of a military campaign. The rituals of blinding and execution were carried out with such efficiency in succeeding generations that in 1666, when Safi II was invited before the court nobles for his coronation, he was afraid to leave the harem because he thought he was being invited only to be blinded or murdered.

The Islamic paradigm for the selection of a ruler was through consultation. The Mongol-Tatar-Turkish paradigm was through fratricide. Muslim politics had long since moved away from that moment when Abu Bakr was elected the Caliph, or when Ali ibn Abu Talib was nominated as the head of state. It was now governed more by the rules of conquering tribes who had entered Islam 500 years after the death of the Prophet. Tribal customs had supplanted the Sunnah of the Companions. The monarchies were Muslim but the process of ascension to the throne was decidedly tribal.

In the 17th century, the absolute monarchies came up against the joint stock companies. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to the English East India Company. Two years later, the Dutch granted a similar



charter to the Dutch East India Company. In 1613, the Dutch Stock Market opened up in Amsterdam. London followed suit. These were the new institutions of the future with an enormous potential to harness the energies of men and material. With a singular focus on profits, they had no religious baggage to contend with or trainloads of priests looking over their shoulders. They did not answer to the Pope; they answered to a Board of Directors. Their structure was more efficient than anything that the despot kings could conjure up and it gave considerable latitude to the administrators and sea captains of the joint stock companies for local initiative and decision-making.

The first skirmishes were between the joint stock companies and the centralized, despotic structures of Portugal and Spain. The Portuguese governors in Goa, for instance, had to look to Lisbon for instructions on major decisions. By the time a decision arrived, circumstances had often changed, making the decision outdated. By contrast, the Dutch and British administrators of East India Companies could make immediate decisions to take advantage of a local situation as long as it helped increase profits. The efficient structure of the companies prevailed over the despotic structure of the Iberians. The North European trading companies quickly supplanted the Spanish and Portuguese monopolies in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. By the year 1700, it was the Dutch, the English and the French, who were the real masters of the oceans of the world.

When the centralized, despotic structures in the Muslim empires came up against the far more efficient structure of the trading companies, they fared no better. In the match between the soldier and the merchant, the merchant won hands down. The two operated in different paradigms and played by different rules. For the soldier-king, personal trust was of paramount importance and a treaty was an instrument that was to be honored and kept. By contrast, to the managers of a joint stock company, a treaty was but a milestone on the way to more profits. It could be overlooked when convenient. Deception couched in diplomacy and backed by intelligence, was a devastating tool in the hands of the company managers. For instance, the English East India Company discarded the treaty it signed with Hyder Ali of Mysore (1781) at Madras as soon as Hyder Ali died. The British proceeded to form an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas of Central India to isolate and destroy the growing power of

Mysore (1789-1799). The despotic structure of the kings, an inverted pyramid pivoted around the monarch, provided abundant opportunities to the merchants. As long as the king was the sole owner of wealth and power, some in his entourage aspired to his riches. The company men were alert to opportunities for bribes, or promises of advancement, to topple the king. Thus it was that Nawab Siraj ad Daulah of Bengal fell in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 through the perfidy of his own Chief of Staff, Mir Ja'afar and Tippu Sultan fell in the Battle of Srirangapatam in 1799, through the treachery of his Finance Minister, Mir Saadiq. In the competition for wealth, the merchant enjoyed a significant, perhaps decisive advantage over the soldier. Greed has been a more potent force in history than valor.

The emergence of the joint stock companies was a decisive factor in the triumph of Europe over the ancient civilizations of Asia and Africa. The older civilizations could not match the opportunism, efficiency and virility of the trading companies. They succumbed one by one, like old elephants trapped by hungry foxes, to the intrigues of Europe.

The only significant institution evolved by the Muslim world in the last thousand years has been the sufi zawiya. The zawiyas served the Muslims well. In Asia, they safeguarded the remnants of the community after the Mongol invasions. In North Africa, they provided social cohesion amidst the disintegration following the breakup of the Al Muhaddith Empire. In the subcontinent, they acted as the focus of spiritual activity and helped bring millions of Indians to Islam. By the very nature of tasawwuf, however, the zawiyas decentralized society. The focus was on individual salvation and local community service. Scant attention was paid to the central authority of the state. Frustrated, the kings and emirs sometimes tried co-opting the sufis, and at other times opposing them. Neither approach worked; the sufis remained an independent decentralizing force. Only on occasion was there coordination between the sufi movements and the reigning monarchs in response to foreign threats, as happened during the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir in Morocco (1578).

The confrontation between a mercantile Europe and sufic Islam was along civilizational lines. The sufis were focused on spiritual fulfillment of the individual. The merchants were focused on group dynamics to achieve maximum profits. The two had different value systems. The North Europeans had discarded any religious pretense for their global thrusts. The

joint stock company was geared towards economic and political centralization. By contrast, the sufis were focused on the local communities. The one valued accumulation of wealth and power; the other shunned them. The Islamic civilization of the 17th century, despite its dazzling brilliance, was essentially inward looking, where wealth was looked upon with ambiguity. Certainly, there was respect and fear of the ruling elite, but the population reserved the highest honor for the sufi shaykhs. In the competition for political ascendancy, the more efficient system of the European traders won.

Considering the stakes involved, the resistance to European penetration was minimal and was limited to a few soldier-kings. The general population was not involved in the contest. The contingent of company troops used by Robert Clive at the Battle of Plassey (1757) was so small that if every Bengali who stood by as an onlooker during the fateful battle had thrown a stone, the Company troops would have been decimated. But it was not to be. The Bengalis continued to watch as bystanders even as Mir Ja'afar, the Chief of Staff of Nawab Siraj ad Daulah, switched sides with his troops just before the battle began. The fate of Bengal was sealed. The wheels of fortune turned and the focus of history shifted from Delhi and Cairo to London and Paris.

Second only in importance to institutional weakness was the loss of initiative in trade and naval technology. The two were interrelated. A review of the relative naval strengths of the Muslim powers with Europe shows a regional pattern. In the western Mediterranean, the ascendancy of European powers became apparent as early as 1450 and it spilled over into the Indian Ocean after 1500. In the eastern Mediterranean, the Ottoman navy demonstrated a toughness and resilience until the year 1600, after which it too went into decline. Examining each of these theaters in some detail, the Portuguese and the Spaniards demonstrated their superiority over the Maghribi emirates in naval technologies throughout the 15th century. The Maghrib was in political disarray just at a time when the Iberian Christian powers were flexing their muscles. Moreover, having surrendered the Mediterranean trade to Genoese merchants, North Africa passed up the opportunity to experiment with naval technology and learn from it. By contrast, the Portuguese and the Spaniards learned from their fellow Christians in Venice and Genoa; and the more advanced technologies

available in the eastern Mediterranean were transferred to the Iberians. Specifically, the know-how for sailing close to the wind, to negotiate the sea in a direction opposite to the direction of wind flow and the technology for the manufacture and use of the cannon were learned from Venice and Genoa. A mastery of these technologies required a commitment from the emperors and noblemen and a willingness to be open to technological input. The Portuguese found a patron for their naval aspirations in Prince Henry, who as the governor of Ceuta and Tangier encouraged naval explorations along the coast of Africa. The Spanish and Portuguese monarchs were willing to finance explorations and voyages by known sailors. A scientific culture had grown up on the Andalusian peninsula, thanks to the legacy of the brilliant Muslim civilization in Spain. By contrast, North Africa was splintered into warring factions. The emirs were perennially short of cash and had to resort to coercion and war to raise funds. These factors combined to give the Christian powers of Portugal and Spain an edge over Muslim North Africa in the race to explore the Atlantic Ocean.

The Portuguese, in particular, rapidly exploited their technical superiority. In a move to outflank the Muslim Maghrib and reach for the gold and ivory of the Sudan, they captured, in fairly rapid succession, the cities of Ceuta, Tangier and Arzila. Using these cities as naval bases, the Portuguese navy ventured forth further south along the African coast. The charting of the sea was methodical and information gathered during the voyages was treated as a state secret and kept confidential, so that other nations might not gain access to the profitable trade. In 1496, Vasco da Gama appeared in the Indian Ocean.

The first visit was a scouting mission. He returned in 1502 at the head of a flotilla of 25 ships, mounted with the most deadly cannon in the Portuguese inventory. His mandate was to destroy the Muslim hold on the Indian Ocean trade and capture it for the King of Portugal. It was at this point of history that the technological weakness of the Muslim powers in the Indian Ocean showed up. That a small armada from a tiny European country could devastate a coastline extending from Sofala in southeast Africa to the Straits of Malacca in Malaysia tells the whole story. None of the littoral states and prosperous cities along the vast Indian Ocean, whether they were Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, could match the Portuguese at sea. Within a span of 15 years, the Portuguese had occupied almost all of the

important trading cities in the Indian Ocean. The only feeble resistance came from the Egyptian Mamluke navy, based in far away Suez; but it was unsuccessful.

The cannon, in combination with deep ocean ships, emerged as a key technological system in the ascent of Europe. Several observations may be offered as to why this technology did not evolve either in West Africa or in the Indian Ocean. In the Maghrib, as we have discussed in some detail, there was tension between the state and society. The Moroccans learned the use of gunpowder technology at about the same time as the Portuguese. The components of gunpowder are saltpeter (sodium nitrate), carbon and sulphur. Saltpeter was available in plenty in North Africa and was sold to English merchants throughout the 15th century. However, the trade benefited the local merchants who supported the sufi zawiyas rather than the emirs in Marrakesh. There was no incentive for the emir to further this trade, or to encourage innovations and developments in technology. By contrast, the Portuguese and the Spaniards worked for their monarchs, who maintained a monopoly on all trade and benefited from technological improvements. A key technological development was the storage of gunpowder in barrels during long sea voyages. In order for gunpowder to function properly, the ingredients have to be mixed uniformly and sufficient spaces must exist between contiguous particles for pressure to develop before ignition takes place. Otherwise, the powder “fizzles” but does not “roar”. On long sea voyages, the saltpeter (sodium nitrate) tends to gravitate to the bottom of the barrel because of its higher density. The Portuguese developed a method of preventing this by stuffing the gunpowder with fine tattered rags, or with fine sawdust. Similar techniques were developed in England in the latter part of the 15th century. No such development took place in the Maghrib or the Sudan.

In the Indian Ocean, the use of ship-mounted cannon was unknown. Giant ships there were, but the use of firearms was limited to small caliber muskets. India, Persia, East Africa, Indonesia and Malaysia were definitely behind Europe in this important technology. This time lag may be explained by the vagaries of history and geography. Gunpowder, invented by the Chinese, was introduced into Central Asia and Persia by Genghiz Khan's troops. The Tatars and the Turks, who often worked as allies of the Mongols, learned its use from the Mongols. As the Tatars accepted Islam,

and the Turks expanded into Anatolia and Egypt, the use of gunpowder became known in the Mediterranean world. The knowledge rapidly spread westward through Muslim influence and Venetian traders, and by 1450 was available in Morocco, Spain and Portugal. The Indian Ocean was far from the major battle routes of the Mongols, Tatars and the Turks. Through much of the 15th century, Central Asia, Persia and West Asia were sorting out the aftermath of the Timurid invasions (1376-1402). India had broken up into small kingdoms during the reign of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d. 1355). Rajas and Sultans ruled in Bengal, Gujrat, the Deccan and the south. The only power that could have provided this technology was China. But the China of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) had retreated into itself after the great voyages of the Muslim Admiral Zheng Yi (1402-1415).

Asia therefore fell behind Europe in adopting the technology of gunpowder for naval warfare. When the Portuguese cannon roared (1502 onwards), there was no one in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean to answer it. The situation did not change much in the succeeding centuries. The Safavid dynasty rose in Persia (1500), and the Moghul Empire consolidated its hold on India (1526). But their naval records were dismal. It took the Safavids more than a hundred years to expel the Portuguese from the Straits of Hormuz, and they accomplished it only with the help of the British (1622). As for the Moghuls, they made no attempt to expel the Portuguese either from Goa or Diu and Daman, accepting instead Portuguese protection for Moghul shipping in the Arabian Sea. Only Emperor Shah Jehan made a feeble attempt to protect Bengal from Portuguese piracy but it too fizzled out after his tenure. A century later, Tippu Sultan of Mysore made a serious attempt to build a navy. The Mysore navy occupied the Laccadive Islands and challenged the rising power of the British. But this attempt proved to be too little, too late. Tippu fell in battle with the British in 1799.

Alone among the Muslim powers, the Ottoman Turks built a credible navy. Sultan Selim (d. 1520) took the initiative in this direction. Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent (d. 1566) expanded on the legacy of his father. From 1530 onwards, the Ottomans were active both in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Drawing upon the considerable experience of Algerian corsairs and the ship building expertise of the Egyptians, a formidable navy was built up. By 1560 they had stopped Portuguese

marauding in the Indian Ocean and had established their naval supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean. The Battle of Lepanto (1571), however, contained Turkish expansion into the Atlantic Ocean. In the east, the Turks continued their missions in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean through much of the 16th century. In 1588, in an encounter off the southern coast of Zanzibar, a Portuguese squadron sent from Goa defeated a Turkish naval patrol. This encounter marked the farthest reach of the Turkish navy in the Indian Ocean. Thereafter, the coastal areas north of Zanzibar remained Islamic whereas those located further south fell into the Portuguese orbit.

However, even the powerful Ottomans treated the navy as a stepchild, allocating to it only a small portion of the total budget. For instance, in 1652, during the reign of Mehmet IV, the total expenditures for the Ottoman Empire were slated at 16,400 purses of silver. Of this amount, 10,000 purses were allocated to the army, 960 purses were allocated to the emperor's kitchen, 255 purses to the Emperor's stables and 988 purses were allocated to the navy. The navy occupied about the same position in the budget as the maintenance of the royal kitchen.

The neglect of the Ottoman navy showed up in the 17th century. After a promising start in the mid-16th century, when the Ottomans dominated the Mediterranean Sea and challenged the Portuguese in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, their naval forces regressed into a second tier position. By 1645, the Venetians were able to successfully blockade not only the Aegean Sea but also Istanbul itself. The siege was lifted in 1657 only after a determined effort made by Grand Vizier Kurpulu. In the Indian Ocean, the Turkish presence became only symbolic. When the Dutch and the British entered the Indian Ocean in the 17th century, the Ottomans were not a factor in the ensuing struggle for supremacy in Asia.

Loss of initiative at sea meant a loss of trade. Between 1502 and 1530, the Portuguese severely disrupted the Indian Ocean trade. Occupying important choke points in Malacca, Goa, Hormuz, Mombasa and Zanzibar, they instituted a pass system and levied taxes on all ships passing through those points. Not even the hajjis could go for hajj unless the Portuguese agents stamped their papers. Indian pepper flowed to Lisbon on Portuguese ships and from there to the ports of Europe, bypassing West Asia. Alexandria in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean experienced an economic depression. With the rise of Ottoman naval power (1530-1570),

an equilibrium developed wherein Turkish as well as Portuguese ships shared in the trade. After the Battle of Lepanto (1571), the Turkish navy went into a steady decline although sporadic attempts were made to revive it. After the year 1600, the Dutch and the British displaced the Portuguese and cornered the Indian Ocean trade. Trade by land routes continued but the initiative increasingly passed on to Europe. After 1700, with the advance of the Russian armies towards the Black Sea, it was the Armenians and not the Persians or the Turks who controlled the land trade across Russia to Europe. Bereft of trade, West Asia withered, its economies shrank and it lost its initiative in world affairs. At about the same time, the dismantling of the Moghul and Safavid dynasties (1720-1760) severely disrupted the land trade through the passes in Afghanistan, further contributing to the economic and social disintegration of the entire region.

The conservative religious establishment in the Muslim world played a role in delaying the introduction of new technologies and new ideas. The history of the printing press offers an illustration. Block printing was invented in China some time before the second century. As early as the year 875, in the reign of Harun ar Rashid, it was known in Baghdad. The technology traveled westward and was introduced into Europe through contacts with the Muslims of Spain and Sicily. Over the years the Europeans made improvements in the art of printing and by 1445, mechanical printing plates were widely used in Germany. Mass printing facilitated a wide circulation of new ideas and was a principal factor in the success of the Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther (d. 1546) and John Calvin (d. 1564). By contrast, there was resistance to the introduction of printing in the Muslim world, where a whole industry had grown up around the art of hand copying and reproducing the Qur'an. The katibs resisted the introduction of the printing press because it meant a loss of their livelihood. Their position was supported by conservative kadis who felt that the Word of God must not be defiled by contact with a machine. It was not until the 18th century, well after political decay had set in and Europe had seized the initiative in technology and politics that the kadis and katibs relented. In 1721, the Ottoman Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha sent a delegation to Paris and instructed it to report back on the arts and technologies that might be introduced in the empire. Following the return of this delegation, the first printing press was established in Istanbul in 1727, more than two hundred years after it had been introduced into Germany, France and England. It was



introduced into the decaying Moghul and Safavid empires shortly thereafter. This time lag held back the development of art, science and technology in the Muslim world at a time when Europe saw a rapid introduction of new ideas and new technologies. The political disintegration that enveloped the Muslim world in the 18 th century only increased the technological gap. By the time Napoleon invaded Egypt (1799) and the British defeated Tippu Sultan of Mysore (1799) and consolidated their hold on India, it was already too late.

Parochial religious zeal played an important part in the disintegration of two of the principal dynasties, namely the Moghuls in India and the Safavids in Persia. We have discussed at length in earlier chapters how Islam turned inwards after the Mongol disasters and how the sufi awliya saved the day for the Muslims. It was this new wave of Islam, spiritual in content, amalgamated with the cultures of the new nations entering the fold of faith that spread into Persia, Central Asia, India, Indonesia and Africa. We have used the term “folk Islam” to describe the composite culture that emerged after the Mongols.

The religious establishment, consisting of kadis and ulema, were suspicious of any departure from strict adherence to the Shariah and were not reconciled to the power of the sufis. Within the Islamic world itself, there was a tension between the sufis and the ulema. (The tension continues to this day as a not-too-polite debate between the “sufi” and “salafi” partisans among Muslims). The 16th century produced several kings and emperors who resonated to sufi culture, founded new dynasties and expanded them into major empires. The real or perceived excesses of these monarchs produced a reaction in the more orthodox circles. By the latter part of the 17th century, the orthodox had prevailed over the sufis in the centers of political power. The triumph of the conservative ulema increased tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, between Shi’a and Sunni and played a direct role in the disintegration of the Moghul and Safavid empires.

In India, the Great Moghul Akbar, a consummate statesman who knew the value of folk Islam, produced a sufi fusion of Islamic and Hindu elements and solidified the Moghul Empire (1565-1605). Akbar was a zealous adherent of folk Islam and treated the Chishti sufis with the highest honor. His initiatives created a cosmopolitan Moghul-Persian-Afghan-

Rajput culture that survives to this day in India and Pakistan. Although there was an orthodox reaction, the principal exponent of which was Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi (d. 1526), Akbar's reforms survived and prospered during the reign of Jehangir (d. 1627) and Shah Jehan (d. 1666). By 1650, this cosmopolitan culture had produced the Taj Mahal and the Jami Masjid of Delhi, while the Hindus found it possible to rise to the highest posts in the empire. Rai Raghunath served as the divan (prime minister) of Shah Jehan, while Rai Chandra

Ban Brahman was the chief of his secretariat. The syncretic tendencies of folk Islam showed themselves in the person of Dara Shikoh, heir apparent to Shah Jehan. Dara was a follower of Mian Pir, a sufi shaykh of Lahore. When Mian Pir passed away, Dara became a follower of his disciple, Mulla Shah. Dara was a scholar of first repute and wrote several books including Majma-ul-Bahrain (1655) and a Farsi translation of the Upanishads. His works were translated into Latin in the 19th century and had a major impact on the German Schopenhauer and the American Emerson.

Dara did not survive the struggle for succession after Shah Jehan. The Orthodox Sunni wing, led by Aurangzeb Alamgir (1656-1708) carried the day. Aurangzeb made the Moghul Empire an Islamic state. Jizya was reimposed on the predominantly Hindu population of India (1679) and their access to the higher offices of the state virtually disappeared. Discriminatory custom duties were imposed on goods belonging to the Hindus. The Rajputs who had provided their muscle for the empire, and had built familial ties with the emperors, withdrew their support. The Marathas in western India rose up in revolt. In the Punjab, the Sikhs were restless. As long as Aurangzeb was alive, his indefatigable energy, resilient character and puritan drive held the empire together. Within 15 years of his death (1707), the empire collapsed. Regional despots established their rule, only to be swallowed up one after the other by the British East India Company.

In Persia, the Safavid dynasty was a product of the Safaviyya sufi movement in eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan (1500). It was the energy, zeal and commitment of the Safaviyya that enabled Shah Ismail I to consolidate his hold on Persia. Throughout the 16th century, the Safaviyya sufis and their military arm, the Qazilbash, played an important part in the Safavid state. By the year 1600, however, the Safaviyya had lost their revolutionary zeal and had become a part of the establishment. The reforms

introduced by Shah Abbas I weakened the power of the Safaviyya and neutralized the power of the Qazilbash. Specifically, the standing army raised by Shah Abbas with recruits from Georgia and the Caucasus meant a decrease in the power of the Qazilbash, who resisted but lost the struggle. With a decrease in the power of the sufis, the qanqas that had provided much needed social services in the countryside since the days of Hulagu Khan (1258) lost their effectiveness. The religious vacuum left by the sufis was filled by the traditional ulema who had no stomach for the esoteric doctrines of the sufis.

The religious transformation in Persia is illustrated by the changes in the inner court circles. In 1587, when Shah Abbas ascended the throne, his wakil was Murshad Kuli Khan Ustanjlu, a Turkoman and a Safaviyya sufi. A hundred years later, when Sulaiman ascended the throne in 1694 as Shah Hussain, it was the traditional ulema who were at the center of power. Shah Hussain was so fastidious in his religious observations that some called him “Mulla Hussain”. Under the influence of the theologians, he turned Persia into a Shi’a Islamic state. The most influential of the theologians was Muhammed Baqi Majlisi (d.1699), a great scholar, but a man with limited political vision. He curtailed the privileges that had hitherto been enjoyed by the Zoroastrians, Armenians, Jews and Sunni Muslims. He zealously pushed Shi’a tenets on the population, backed up by the state apparatus. Persia, like Moghul India, turned its back on the composite folk religion of sufic Islam and opted to become an Islamic state with Shi’a Islam the state religion just as Sunni Islam had become the state religion of India under Aurangzeb. Majlisi’s grandson, Mir Muhammed Hussain, became the principal theologian after him and followed his grandfather’s policies. Intolerance bred sectarian schisms.

The rising power of the ulema was in direct proportion to the lack of interest shown by Shah Hussain in state affairs. The forcible introduction of Shi’a ideas into non-Shi’a areas bred open rebellion. The first to erupt was Qandahar in southern Afghanistan, a predominantly Sunni area that had been wrested from the Great Moghuls of India by Shah Abbas I. Following the conquest, Shah Abbas settled the Abdali and Ghalzay (Sunni) tribes in the areas of Herat and Qandahar. These tribes were, in general, loyal to the Safavid throne in Isfahan and opposed repeated attempts by the Great Moghuls to recapture Qandahar. In the compulsive religious atmosphere

introduced by Shah Hussain, they shifted their allegiance and looked to the Moghul governor in Kabul for help. Reaction from Isfahan was swift. The Shah dispatched

Gurghan Khan at the head of seasoned Georgian troops to punish the Ghalzay. Gurghan discharged his responsibility with ruthless efficiency, captured their leader Mir Vais and sent him as a prisoner to Isfahan. Mir Vais, a shrewd politician, cultivated the friendship of the Shah and was soon let go. Gurghan Khan died in 1704. In 1709, the Afghans rose up again under Mir Vais and in 1711 inflicted a major defeat on Safavid forces at the Battle of Qandahar. At about the same time, the Sunni Abdalis in Herat also rebelled and moved away from the orbit of Safavid central power.

Rebellions broke out in other Sunni areas as well. The Azerbaijanis evicted the Safavid troops and appealed to the Ottomans for help. The Kurds rose up and moved on Hamadan. The Sultan of Oman occupied Bahrain and the islands in the Persian Gulf. Sensing an historic opportunity, Czar Peter of Russia moved south and occupied Darband. While the empire was aflame with open rebellion, the Shah was apathetic and the task of defending the empire fell on the Grand Vizier, Fath Ali Khan. Fath Ali, a Sunni from the Caucasus, tried to stem the tide of rebellion but fell victim to a Shi'a court conspiracy and was eliminated. His death infuriated the Turkomans of Shirvan who occupied Shamakhi and placed it under Ottoman protection.

Meanwhile, in Qandahar, a young soldier Mahmud became the leader of the Ghalzay. In 1721, he marched on Kirman at the head of 20,000 Ghalzay, Baluchi and Hazara Afghans and captured it. Continuing his march toward the capital, he was met by a Persian force of 40,000 near the village of Gulnabad on the outskirts of Isfahan. The demoralized Persians had no unified command, with the new Grand Vizier Muhammed Kuli Khan Shamlu and the vali of Arabistan sharing the command structure. The Afghans carried the day while the Persians retreated in disarray.

Even at this late stage, Shah Hussain made no attempt to raise a new army. He was under the influence of the theologian Mir Muhammed Hussain, grandson of Muhammed Baqir Majlisi. Mir Hussain had no aptitude for military affairs and his advice was consistently wrong. Under his influence, the Shah refused to evacuate the capital. In 1722, Mahmud laid siege to Isfahan. The Shah could not feed the huge population of the

city. Food ran out. The situation was desperate. On October 22, 1722, the Shah surrendered and abdicated in favor of Mahmud. The Safavid dynasty disappeared, a victim of the excessive parochial zeal of the Shi'a ulema.

Sensing the demise of the Safavids, the Ottomans and the Russians agreed to carve up Persian territories in the northwest among themselves. In 1723 the Ottomans occupied Georgia, Kirman and Hamadan. The Russians moved deeper into Azerbaijan and occupied Baku. In Isfahan, the Ghulzay dynasty was short lived. Internal feuds broke out among the Afghans. In 1736, Nadir Quli Beg Afshar, belonging to the Afshar tribe, displaced the Ghulzay and ascended the throne of Persia under the title of Nadir Shah.

Over-arching all these factors, there was a general decay in spirituality and ethics among the Muslims. By the end of the 17th century, the rot pervaded the entire body politic, from top to bottom. Gone was the faith that had propelled the mujahids from the deserts of Arabia to the hills of Andalus. Gone also was the zeal of the ghazis that had taken the Turks to the outskirts of Vienna, in the heart of Europe. Greed had replaced valor. Chicanery had taken the place of integrity. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to this sad state of affairs is to be found in a letter written in 1704 by Aurangzeb Alamgir to his third son Azam. In words that are as full of pathos as they convey the heartrending loneliness of a pious emperor, the Great Moghul laments:

“My son, my soul, life of my life ... Hameeduddin is a cheat ... Siadat Khan and Muhammed Amin Khan in the advanced guard are contemptible ... Kulich Khan is worthless ... Sarbarah Khan, the Kotwal, is a thief and a pickpocket ... Arshi Khan gets drunk and smells of liquor ... Akbar is a vagabond in the desert of infamy ... Kam Baksh is perverse. I myself am forlorn and destitute and misery is my lot.”

It was this decaying Muslim body politic, spiritually spent and ethically exhausted, that came up against the expansive European companies in the 18th century. The Muslims, smug in their self-righteousness, did not understand the nature of the European challenge. As opposed to the Europeans who were keen observers of the crosscurrents in the Islamic

world and exploited them to their advantage, the Muslims had little intelligence about their adversaries. This smugness is as characteristic of Muslims today as it was 200 years ago. Few Muslim institutions of higher learning train scholars who are as conversant with the philosophy, religion, ethics, sociology and culture of non-Muslims as they are with Islamic sciences. All too often, modern sciences are marginalized as secular and “Western”.

Institutions do not grow in a vacuum. They are a product of the legal, spiritual and historical experience of a people and provide them with a framework to work together, so that they can achieve uncommon results. The triumph of the West over the Islamic world raises a most profound and troublesome question for a Muslim thinker: Have the Muslims wandered so far away from their ethical roots that other civilizations have overtaken them in spirituality and ethics, which provide the binding cement for a civilization?

# A CONCLUDING WORD

The question is often asked what Muslims need to do to regain their civilizational initiative.

In seeking answers to this question, one must at the outset make a distinction between Islam and Muslims. Islam is alive and well. It is the most dynamic, fastest growing faith in the world.

One cannot make the same statement about Muslims. Countries that are predominantly Muslim play but a minor role in world affairs and subsist as an appendage to one major power or another. They are technologically, economically and educationally backward, unable to exploit their own natural resources except with outside help. What is more alarming is that on a comparative scale, they are falling behind not only the industrially advanced countries but are also outdistanced by the larger non-Western countries such as India and China. Corruption is rampant and pervasive. Political legitimacy of the ruling classes is at best questionable.

With this dismal picture in mind, the question of what Muslims should do to regain their civilizational initiative becomes pertinent. Indeed, it becomes pressing and acute. The majesty of the historical process and its comprehensive reach, does not provide a single answer. It only offers possibilities.

Our global survey of Islamic history suggests some such possibilities. We summarize them with the acronym SEEEC, where S stands for spirituality, the first E stands for ethics, the second E represents education, the third E connotes economics and the C represents cooperation.

The spirituality of Islam provided the life raft for Muslims in their darkest hour during the Mongol invasions of the 13th century. It can do so again in the twenty first century. To a secular modern world that is governed by a material view of humankind, Islam offers a lofty vision of man as the Divine regent, animated by a soul, suffused by Divine spirit, endowed with a free will and tasked with the responsibility to rule all that is between the heavens and earth. Spirituality is the core essence of Islam and the common domain from which it can build bridges to the other major faiths of humankind.

Ethics is the second dimension of renewal. Faith, kinship and contract are the elements that provide the cement for a civilization. And contract is a part of ethics. The modern world runs on the basis of contract, sometimes consummated by a handshake, at other times documented in the most elaborate manner by a New York lawyer. The Muslims lost their initiative to other civilizations because they lost their focus on their own innate spirituality and surrendered the high moral ground of ethics. When Mir Ja'afar betrayed Nawab Siraj ad Dawlah at the Battle of Plassey (1757), and Mir Saadiq betrayed Tipu Sultan at the Battle of Srirangapatam (1799), they violated their trust. It was manifest proof that Muslim civilization had reached a low point in its ethical standards and produced traitors who would sell their rulers and their countries for a pittance. Ethically, the issue is no different when a modern civil servant engages in graft, a businessman reneges on his contract, or the head of a state siphons off state funds into a Swiss bank.

Education is the third dimension of renewal. It is tied in integrally with culture. Backwardness in education is a sign of poverty of culture. In the classical age of Islamic civilization, Muslims led the world in the study of the spiritual as well as the empirical and rational sciences. Their universities were beacons of light for the world and attracted scholars from far and wide. They led the way in understanding creation through the natural and physical sciences, and in creating divine patterns in the world of man through the disciplines of Fiqh, tasawwuf, geometry, astronomy, medicine and mathematics. Now, it is their turn to relearn. This requires a far-reaching effort to get away from a narrow compartmentalization of knowledge between what is deen (religion) and what is duniya (world), or a parochial view of the globe divided between Dar al Islam (the abode of Islam) and Dar al Harab (the abode of conflict). A deep understanding of the physical and natural sciences increases faith, and does not negate it. The entire globe is

Dar al Islam in that it receives the bounty of God. No human being is denied the mercy and compassion of the Creator.

Economics is the fourth dimension of Islamic reconstruction. It relates in an integral manner to education, ethics and mutual cooperation. Islam encourages trade and admonishes people to avoid riba (usury). In a global village knit together with instant communications, the Muslims must



continuously strive to build commercial links with each other and with the rest of the world. Economic cooperation is the antidote to poverty. A world that engages in trade is a better world than a world that engages in war.

Mutual cooperation is a key to survival. Since the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924, the Islamic world does not have a spiritual or political focus. While avoiding slogans of pan-Islamism or pan-Arabism, the Muslims can help themselves through mutual cooperation in education, trade, commerce and communication. And they must build bridges to other civilizations based on a shared spirituality and a common human destiny. A shared world is a better world for all humankind.

It is our hope that in the years to come, the global Muslim community will go through a two-way osmosis, learning from the outside world that which is good and sharing with the world that which is noble. Islam has the historic opportunity to impart a spiritual dimension to the rich spectrum of human ideas and round out the jagged edges of a global materialist civilization. Muslims, in their collective endeavor as architects of their own destiny, must shape the processes that will make this happen. In this endeavor, Islamic history can be a most valuable guide, and a worthy companion.

## CHRONOLOGY

(Note: Events from 570 to 1405 CE are covered in Volume I)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
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1406	Sultan Sikander Shah of Malaysia accepts Islam.
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The great Chinese Admiral Zheng Yi (commonly known as Admiral Ho), a Muslim, sails to Malaya, Indonesia, India, Persia, Yemen, East Africa and the Cape of Good Hope with a fleet of 50 great ships.

Death of ibn Khaldun, author of Muqaddamah.

1409 Shah Rukh, heir to Timurlane, occupies Samarqand.

1410 Kara Yusuf establishes the Kara Kuyunlu kingdom around Tabriz, Persia.

Death of Gaysu Daraz, sufi shaykh of the Deccan, India.

1411 Sultan Iskander Shah of Malaya visits China at the invitation of the Chinese Emperor.

Prince Mehmet begins the reconsolidation of the Ottoman Empire after the disastrous defeat in the Battle of Ankara.

1415 The Portuguese capture Ceuta in Morocco.

1420 Shah Rukh consolidates his hold on Persia.

1421 Murad II becomes Ottoman Sultan.

1422 Murad II lays unsuccessful siege to Constantinople.

1424 Death of Sultan Iskander Shah of Malaya.

1425 Tangier, Morocco, captured by the Portuguese.

1430 The Portuguese acquire the technology to sail against the wind from the Venetians.

1432 Portuguese captain Diaz sails around Cape Bajador in West Africa.

1434 Death of Shah Rukh. Persia disintegrates. The Kara Kuyunlu and Aq Kuyunlu expand their territories.

Ulugh Bey of Farghana (Uzbekistan) authorizes the construction of an observatory in Samarqand.

1441 First slave raid by the Portuguese in southern Morocco directed against Muslims.

1443 The Portuguese capture the island of Tristao off the coast of West Africa, later to gain notoriety in the Atlantic slave trade.

1444 Ottomans armies march into Hungary.

Murad II defeats combined armies of Hungary, Wallachia and Venice at the Battle of Varna.

The Portuguese Lagos Company chartered under Prince Henry.

1445 Printing is introduced into Europe. Portuguese sailor Diaz sails around Cape Verde in West Africa.

1451 Mehmet II becomes Ottoman Sultan.

Shaykh Rahmat converts the Majapahit ruler (Indonesia) Raja Kertawijaya to Islam.

Islam spreads rapidly in Java.

1453 Mehmet II conquers Constantinople, renames it Istanbul and makes it the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

1455 The Venetians sail to the delta of the Gambia River.

1456 Mehmet II captures Athens, Greece.

The Portuguese arrive at the mouth of the Gambia River.

1458 The Portuguese occupy the fortress of al Qasr, Morocco.

1460 King Alfonso of Portugal authorizes Fernao Gomes to explore the western coast of Africa.

1461 Leonardo da Vinci begins his work in Venice.

1463 Mehmet II conquers Bosnia. Mosque of Sultan Mehmet II constructed in Istanbul.

1465 Death of al Jazuli, sufi Shaykh in Morocco.

1467 Herzegovina conquered by Mehmet II.

Uzun Hassan, leader of Aq Quyunlu defeats Jehan Shah, leader of the Kara Quyunlu. Jehan Shah dies in battle.

1471 Tangiers occupied by Portugal.

Portugal occupies Arzila on the West coast of Morocco.

1473 Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II defeats the Aq Kuyunlu Sultan Uzun Hassan. Portuguese captain Sequira sails to Benin, Nigeria.

1474 Commercial town of Kedah, in Indonesia, becomes Muslim.

1475 War between Spain and Portugal over rights to the Canary Islands.

1478 Kara Quli, a descendant of Jehan Shah, flees to India and establishes the Qutubshahi dynasty near Hyderabad.

Death of Uzun Hassan, Aq Quyunlu Sultan.

Turmoil in western Persia.

1479 Consolidation of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella.

1480 The Ottomans capture the island of Rhodes.

1481 Bayazid II becomes Ottoman Sultan.

1482 Ferdinand of Spain attacks al Hama.

1483 Civil wars in Granada. Ferdinand captures Malaga, Spain.

1484 The Portuguese appear at the delta of the Congo River.

1487 Portuguese sailor Diaz rounds the Cape of Good Hope.

1488 Malaga, one of the last Nasirid strongholds, falls to Castile.

1489 Adil Shah becomes Sultan of Bijapur, India.

1490 Ferdinand lays siege to Granada, called Santa Fe (Holy Faith).

Columbus discovers America. Granada falls to the Christians. Beginning of the Spanish Inquisition. The Jews are expelled from Spain. Sultan Bayazid II takes Hungary. Lodhi Sultanate established in Delhi.

Death of Abdur Rahman Jami, well known Farsi poet.

Abu Abdallah, commonly known as Boabdil, last emir of Granada, leaves Spain.

Askiya Muhammed becomes Emperor of Songhay.

At the Treaty of Tordesillas arranged by Pope Alexander VI, Portugal and Spain agree to divide up the world for conquest.

Shaykh Putah introduces Islam into the Celebes islands and western New Guinea.

Vasco da Gama, sails around the Cape of Good Hope and with the help of Muslim navigator Ahmed ibn Majid, discovers route to Malabar, India.

Zahiruddin Babur loses Samarqand.

Askiya Muhammed moves the capital of Songhay to Gao on the Niger River.

1499 Ottoman navy defeats the Venetians, takes Lepanto, off the coast of Greece.

1500 Muslims in Granada resist the Spanish Inquisition. Spain institutes forced slavery in Cuba.

1501 Shah Ismail I, with the help of the Safaviyya sufi order, establishes the Safavid dynasty in Persia.

The Uzbek Shaibani Khan evicts Zahiruddin Babur from Samarqand.

1502 Second voyage of Vasco da Gama to the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese bombard the city-states of East Africa, destroy the port city of Cochin, India and force the Raja of Cochin to expel Muslim traders.

The Portuguese capture Shofala, East Africa.

Leonardo da Vinci paints the Mona Lisa.

Inquisition against the Muslims in Spain.

1504 Babur takes Kabul, Afghanistan.

Death of al Maghili, influential thinker from North Africa.

1505 Spain occupies Mars al Kabir, Algeria.

The Portuguese occupy Agadir, Morocco and build the fort of Santa Cruz.

Portuguese captain Almeida raids Kilwa, Tanzania.

1507 The Portuguese occupy Safi, Morocco.

The Portuguese occupy Bab el Mandap at the entrance to the Red Sea.

1508 A Mamluke fleet defeats the Portuguese off the coast of Chaul near modern Karachi.

Spain occupies Oran, Algeria.

1509 The Mamlukes defeat the Portuguese navy off the coast of Yemen.

Shah Ismail I defeats the Uzbek Shaibani Khan at the Battle of Merv.

Spain occupies Bogie, Tunisia.

The first batch of slaves bought in Lisbon for transportation to America.

1511 The Portuguese take Goa, India, and make it the capital of their operations in the Indian Ocean.

The Inquisition is instituted against Hindus and Muslim in India.

Spain destroys Tripoli, Libya.

The Ottomans crush a Qazilbash uprising in eastern Anatolia at the Battle of Sivas.

1512 Selim I becomes Ottoman Sultan.

The Portuguese capture the Straits of Malacca.

Tlemcen in North Africa becomes a protectorate of Spain.

The Uzbeks defeat the Safavids at the Battle of Khuzduvan and take Khorasan.

1514 Ottoman Sultan Selim I defeats Shah Ismail I at the Battle of Chaldiran.

1515 The Portuguese capture the Straits of Hormuz in Persia. The Portuguese control the entire Atlantic coastline of Morocco. First shipload of sugar from Cuba arrives in Spain.

1516 The Portuguese occupy Bahrain and Oman. The Ottomans capture Mosul.

Ottoman Sultan Selim I defeats the Mamlukes at the Battle of Marj Dabik in Syria.

1517 Selim I occupies Cairo.

Egypt becomes a province of the Ottoman Empire. The Caliphate moves to Istanbul. Selim I becomes the first Ottoman Caliph of Islam. Muhammed al Mahdi becomes Sa'adid Sultan of Morocco. Martin Luther begins Protestant reformation in Germany. The Portuguese capture Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The King of Spain grants license to import African slaves into America. Ibrahim Lodhi becomes Sultan of Delhi.

1519 Death of Leonardo da Vinci. Mexican silver flows into Europe.

1520 Sulaiman the Magnificent becomes Ottoman Sultan.

1521 Sulaiman captures Belgrade.

Cortez destroys the Aztec Empire of Mexico.

1522 Sulaiman captures Rhodes. Spain captures Central America.

1525 Death of Safavid Shah Ismail I. Tahmasp I becomes Safavid ruler of Persia. Babur takes Lahore, Pakistan.

Sulaiman the Magnificent orders a reorganization of the Ottoman fleet to challenge the Spaniards and the Portuguese.

1526 Babur captures Delhi; the Moghul dynasty is born. Sulaiman the Magnificent defeats the Hungarians at the Battle of Mohacs.

1527 Babur defeats Rajput armies at the Battle of Khanua.

1528 Sultan Sulaiman captures the city of Buda in Hungary. Askiya Muhammed becomes blind and is deposed as the Emperor of Songhay.

1529 Sultan Sulaiman lays siege to Vienna, Austria.

1530 Death of Zahiruddin Babur. His son Humayun ascends the Moghul throne in Delhi.

The Englishman William Hawkins raids the Ivory Coast.

1534 Khairuddin, admiral of the Ottoman fleets, recaptures Tunis.

Henry VIII takes the Church of England out of the orbit of Rome.

1535 Sulaiman Pasha, Ottoman governor of Egypt, drives the Portuguese from Yemen.

The English Parliament passes laws against loitering in London.

John Calvin preaches the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland.

Stock Exchange is established in London.

1536 Khairuddin raids Valencia, Spain.

1537 Khairuddin captures Otranto, Italy and threatens Rome.

1538 Khairuddin victorious over combined navies of Venice and the Vatican at the Battle of Prevesa.

1540 Spain colonizes the Philippines.

Destruction of the relics in England. Beginning of the end of feudalism in England.

Sher Shah Suri defeats Moghul Emperor Humayun and displaces him from the throne of Delhi until 1555.

1541 Charles V of Spain strikes at the Algerian coast.

Ottoman Admiral Khairuddin takes Taranto, Italy.

Muhammed al Saadi drives the Portuguese from the fort of Santa Cruz in Morocco.

1542 Increasing tribal warfare in West Africa.

1546 Death of Khairuddin. Piri Rais becomes admiral of Ottoman navies.

Kingdom of Aceh in Indonesia is founded. Islam spreads in the Archipelago.

The Ottomans reclaim Tripoli.

Piri Rais challenges the Portuguese blockage of the Straits of Hormuz.

1553 Thomas Wyndham of England raids the coast of West Africa.

1554 John Lock of England raids the Ivory Coast.

1557 The Ottomans occupy Masawa, Eritrea.

1558 Akbar becomes Moghul Emperor of India.

1560 Akbar adds Malwa, Chitoor, Rathambur, Gujrat and Bengal to the Moghul Empire (1560-1574).

Abul Fazal and Faizi, well known writers, grace the Moghul court.

Akbar surrounds himself with the “seven gems”; men of outstanding capabilities, including the musician Tan Sen and the Finance Minister Raja Todar Mal.

1561 Piri Rais prepares an accurate map of the Atlantic seaboard.

The Ottomans destroy a Spanish fleet at the Battle of Djerba.

1562 Akbar marries Jodha Bai, princess of Amber, Rajasthan.

1563 First English fortifications off the coasts of New Guinea.

1564 Spain occupies the Philippines.

1565 Battle of Telekote, India. The combined forces of Bijapur, Golkunda, Bidar and Gulbarga defeat the armies of Vijayanagar in southern India.

Piri Rais undertakes unsuccessful siege of Malta.



Akbar, the Great Moghul, captures Gujrat.

John Hawkins of England conducts slave raids on Sierra Leone.

Sulaiman the Magnificent passes away.

1566 Muslims in Spain rebel against forced conversion to Catholicism.

1571 Battle of Lepanto. Combined navies of Spain, Venice, Austria and the Vatican defeat the Ottoman navy and occupy Tunis. Ottoman naval advance into the western Mediterranean is halted.

1572 The Ottomans reclaim Tunis.

The Dutch gain their independence from Spain.

1573 The Moghul Emperor Akbar authorizes the construction of four large temples in Mathura.

1576 The Ottomans advance through Algeria and take the city of Fez in Morocco.

1578 Battle of Al Qasr al Kabir. The Sa'adid Sultan Ahmed al Mansur crushes the Portuguese army. King Sebastian of Portugal is killed. Morocco remains independent. Ottoman westward advance is halted.

1579 Akbar, the Great Moghul, completes the construction of a new city, Fatehpur Sikri. He starts ecumenical discussions with all religious faiths in the Ibadat Khana.

1580 Ottoman Admiral Ali Beg raids Portuguese positions in East Africa.

Skirmishes between the Empire of Songhay and the Sa'adids of Morocco over the salt mines of Taodini.

Portugal becomes a protectorate of Spain.

1581 Akbar, the Great Moghul, moves to Lahore, and adds Kashmir, Sindh, Baluchistan and southern Afghanistan to his empire.

Akbar completes the construction of a Jami Masjid in Peshawar.

Queen Elizabeth I sends Harborne as ambassador to Istanbul to seek trade relations with the Ottomans.

1585 War between the Safavids and the Ottomans for control of Iraq and Azerbaijan.

1587 Pope Sixtus V authorizes a Catholic crusade against England.

The English defeat the Scots. Consolidation of Britain under the English throne.

1588 Shah Abbas becomes Safavid emperor of Persia.

The Spanish armada is destroyed off the coast of England.

Death of Sinan, architect of Sulaimaniye and Shehzade mosques in Turkey.

1590 William Shakespeare writes in England.

1591 The Bohras emerge as a sub-branch of the Fatimids.

1592 The Sa'adids of Morocco invade the Songhay Empire. A strong force under Judar Pasha destroys Timbaktu.

1596 Akbar captures Ahmednagar in the Deccan, India.

1598 A second Spanish attempt to conquer England ends in failure.

1600 Dutch ascendancy in the Atlantic. The Atlantic slave trade gathers momentum.

The British East India Company is granted a charter by Queen Elizabeth I.

1602 Shah Abbas drives the Portuguese from Bahrain.

The Dutch East India Company is formed.

1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth I.

1605 Death of Moghul Emperor Akbar.

1609 Final expulsion of Muslims from Spain.

1615 The Dutch capture the Straits of Malacca from the Portuguese.

Thomas Roe arrives in India as British ambassador to the Moghul court.

Galileo is tried by the Church for his view that the earth is not the center of the universe.

1619 The Dutch East India Company obtains trading rights on the island of Java.

Thomas Roe obtains a farman from the Great Moghul Jehangir granting Britain trading rights in India.

1620 Sufi doctrines spread to East Asia.

The Pilgrims land at Port Plymouth, Massachusetts.

1622 Shah Abbas I, with the help of the British navy, expels the Portuguese from the Straits of Hormuz. The British obtain trading rights in Persia.

1623 Murad IV becomes Ottoman Sultan.

1624 Death of Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi, referred to as Mujaddid alf e Thani (Reformer of the Second Millennium). He expounded the doctrine of Wahdat as Shahada.

The Dutch establish themselves in New Amsterdam (New York).

Shah Jehan, Moghul Emperor of India.

1630 Death of German Astronomer Johann Kepler.

1635 Death of Mian Pir of Lahore, teacher of Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jehan.

Emperor Shah Jehan expels the Portuguese from Bengal.

1638 Shah Jehan builds a new capital at Delhi. Construction of the Jami Masjid in Delhi.

1638 The British East India Company establishes a factory at Madras.

1640 Armed rivalry between Britain, France and the Dutch for control of the slave trade.

Portugal gains its independence from Spain.

The Dutch capture Sri Lanka.

The British East India Company establishes a factory at Calcutta.

1641 Sultana Tajul Alam Safiyyiatuddin rules as Queen of Acheh. She is the first of four queens to rule over the northern part of Sumatra.

The Dutch capture Cochin on the West coast of India.

1642 The Dutch establish a colony at Masulipatam on the East coast of India.

1643 War between Venice and the Ottomans for control of Crete.

1648 Shah Jehan completes the Taj Mahal, the most celebrated monument to love, for his wife Mumtaz Mahal.

The Portuguese recapture Brazil from the Dutch.

1655 The Kurpulu brothers Mehmet Pasha and Fazil Ahmed revitalize the Ottoman administration (1655-1676).

1658 Aurangzeb becomes the Moghul Emperor.

1659 End of the Sa'adid dynasty in Morocco.

1660 Isaac Newton revolutionizes physics.

1664 The British seize New Amsterdam, rename it New York. The Battle of St. Gotthard between the Ottomans and the European "Holy League" ends in a stalemate.

1666 The Qur'an is translated into the Malay language.

1668 King Charles II of England sells Bombay to the East India Company.

1676 Kara Mustafa Pasha becomes grand vizier in Istanbul.

1677 War between Russia and the Ottomans over access to the Black Sea.

1678 1683 The second siege of Vienna ends in failure. The Ottomans lose Hungary.

1686 The Hapsburgs advance through Hungary towards Belgrade. The British make an attempt to capture the port of Chittagong in India and are beaten back by Moghul forces.

1687 The Ottomans are defeated at the second Battle of Mohacs.

1688 1694 The Bank of England advances a perpetual loan of 1.2 million pounds to the British Crown in return for the privilege of putting its own notes into circulation.

1696 Peter of Russia captures the strategic fortress of Azov from the Ottomans.

The Sultan of Oman recaptures Fort Jesus of Mombasa from the Portuguese.

1707 Death of Aurangzeb. The Moghul Empire begins to disintegrate.

1708 The assassination of Guru Gobind Singh sets off Sikh revolts against Moghul rule in India.

1713 The British displace the Dutch as the most powerful force in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

1722 Tahmasp II, last Safavid ruler of Persia ascends the Persian throne. Nizam ul Mulk is appointed the Subedar of Hyderabad.

1736 Nadir Shah becomes Emperor of Persia, displaces the Safavid Tahmasp II.

1739 Nadir Shah of Persia invades India, sacks Delhi, and carries off the Peacock Throne.

1740 Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab starts his movement in Najd, Arabia.

1741 Ahmed ibn Said becomes Sultan of Oman and Zanzibar and attempts to build a strong navy.

1746 Muhammed ibn Saud establishes the Saudi dynasty near Riyadh.

1754 The French General Dupleix leaves India. France loses the contest for control of Indian trade to the British.

1756 Anglo-French wars in India and America (1756-63). The British are victorious over the French.

1757 The Battle of Plassey. The British gain control of Bengal, India.

1758 The Industrial Revolution in England gains momentum, fueled by the loot from Bengal.

The Marathas occupy Lahore; oust Timur, son of Nadir Shah of Kabul.

1761 Third Battle of Panipat near Delhi. The Afghans under Ahmed Shah Abdali defeat Maratha armies.

1762 Death of Shah Waliullah of Delhi, leading reformer.

1763 The Treaty of Paris. The French give up their interests in India and America.

1764 The British starve the Begums of Oudh, India, to surrender their jewels.

Battle of Buxor. The British defeat the combined armies of Oudh, Bengal and Delhi.

1765 The British wage a brutal campaign against the Afghans of Rohilla in India.

1767 The First Mysore War (1767-68). Tippu Sultan and his father Hyder Ali force the British to sue for peace.

1772 The British Parliament abolishes the slave trade.

1776 The Colonies declare independence in America. The American War of Independence (1776-83) follows.

1780 The Second Mysore War. Tippu Sultan defeats the British at the Battle of Pollipur.

1781 George Washington defeats General Cornwallis at the Battle of Saratoga. Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown, retires to England, is hired by the East India Company, and is sent to battle Tippu Sultan of Mysore.

1787 Death of Shaykh ibn Abdul Wahhab of Arabia.

1789 The Third Mysore War (1789-91). Cornwallis forces Tippu Sultan to cede half of his Territory; takes Tippu's children as hostage. Beginning of the French Revolution.

1793 The British Permanent Settlement Act imposes feudal landlords upon Bengal.

Napoleon lands in Egypt and is victorious at the Battle of the Pyramids.

The British capture Colombo from the Dutch.

Napoleon corresponds with Tippu Sultan of Mysore and the Sultan of Oman about an invasion of India.

Tippu Sultan falls at the Battle of Srirangapatam.

Napoleon is defeated by Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar and is forced to withdraw from Egypt.

1801 The Wahhabis raid Karbala. Wahhabi movement spreads to Iraq.

The Wahhabis raid the Hejaz.

1803 Muhammed Ali becomes the Ottoman governor of Egypt; starts a long series of reforms. The Marathas in Poona, India, sue for peace with the British. Denmark abolishes the slave trade. Emir Abdul Aziz of Najd captures Mecca.

- 1805 Muhammed Ali becomes the Pasha of Egypt.
- 1806 British armies enter Delhi.
- 1807 Uthman dan Fuduye establishes the Sokoto Caliphate.  
Muhammed Ali Pasha beats back a British attempt to seize Alexandria, Egypt.
- 1808 The United States abolishes the slave trade.
- 1812 Muhammed Ali of Egypt recaptures Mecca and Hejaz from the Wahhabis (1812-15).
- 1817 Death of Uthman dan Fuduye, mujahid in West Africa.  
Muhammed Bello becomes Caliph of the Sokoto Empire.
- 1818 Holland abolishes the slave trade.
- 1819 1821 Greek war against the Ottomans.
- 1827 Naval Battle of Navarino pits European axis against the Ottomans. Shaykh Ahmed Lobo establishes the kingdom of Lobo in West Africa.
- 1828 War between Russia and the Ottomans over control of the Black Sea. Russia advances into Anatolia.
- 1830 Greece breaks off from the Ottoman Empire.  
France occupies Algiers.
- 1834 Beginning of Muslim resistance to the Russians in Daghestan, Crimea and the Caucasus.
- 1835 The Ottomans defeat the French at Malta.  
The British replace Persian with English in the higher courts in India.
- 1837 Sanusiya sufi brotherhood is founded in North Africa.
- 1838 British invasion of Afghanistan ends in failure.
- 1839 Abdul Mecit I becomes Ottoman Sultan.  
Beginning of Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire.
- 1840 France starts colonization of Algeria.
- 1846 The Bank Act of 1846 in England confers legal recognition on the negotiability of credit documents.

1848 Nasiruddin Shah ascends the throne of Persia.

1850 The Bahai schism starts in Persia.

1851 The British build a railroad linking Alexandria with Suez (1851-54).

1853 The Tijaniya sufi brotherhood is established in West Africa.

Beginning of the Crimean War. Britain and France support the Ottomans against Russia.

1854 Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt grants a concession to French Engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps to build the Suez Canal. Egypt borrows funds from international bankers to complete the canal.

The Ottomans take their first loan from international bankers.

1856 End of the Crimean war between Russia and the Ottomans.

1857 The Sepoy Uprising in India. After initial successes, the Uprising is crushed by the British. End of Moghul rule. The British exile the last Moghul Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to Rangoon, Burma.

1858 The Russians capture Imam Shamil, Naqshbandi Imam in Daghestan. End of Muslim resistance in Chechnya and Daghestan.

1859 Death of Muhammed al Sanusi, Reformer, sufi Shaykh of Libya.

1860 Alhajj Omar resists French colonization in Sene-Gambia.

1861 American Civil War (1861-65). The price of Egyptian cotton soars in world markets.

1863 Abraham Lincoln proclaims the abolition of slavery.

1869 The Suez Canal opens with much fanfare.

The price of Egyptian cotton drops precipitously. Egyptian public debt mounts.

Tunisia falters on debt payments to European bankers. The International Debt Commission for Tunisia assumes control over Tunisian finances.

1871 A unified Germany emerges as the most powerful continental power in Europe.

1873 The Dutch capture the Kingdom of Aceh in Sumatra. Beginning of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia.



1874 Syed Ahmed Khan founds the Aligarh College in India.

1875 Egypt sells off its share in the Suez Canal Company to the British to partially offset its debts.

1876 Abdul Hamid II becomes the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph. He starts consolidation of ties with Muslim peoples worldwide.

Egypt falters on debt payments. Britain and France appoint a Commission on Egyptian Public Debt with the power to confiscate revenues.

1877 Russia invades the Ottoman Empire (1877-78). Russian troops advance to within ten miles of Istanbul and dictate capitulation terms to the Turks at the Treaty of San Stefano.

1878 Egypt is forced by Britain and France to accept international control over her finances.

Treaty of Berlin results in effective dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.

Britain occupies Cyprus.

1879 Britain and France force Khedive Ismail Pasha of Egypt to abdicate in favor of his son Tawfiq Pasha. Sultan Abdul Hamid acquiesces in the abdication.

1880 The French, in violation of the Treaty of Berlin, occupy Tunisia and declare it a “protectorate”.

1881 Egyptian nationalists under Ahmed Torabi Pasha stage protests against foreign control.

1882 The British bombard Alexandria into submission, defeat the Egyptians at the Battle of Tel el Kabir and occupy Cairo.

The Mahdi seizes Khartoum and establishes a Caliphate in the Sudan.

1885 The British storm Khartoum. Death of al Mahdi of the Sudan. An Englishman, Allan Hume, founds the Indian National Congress.

1888 Ghulam Mirza Ahmed starts the Ahmadiya schism in Punjab, India. The movement draws strong opposition from the ulema.

1891 The Tobacco Concession touches off an uproar in Persia. Peaceful boycott of tobacco, under a fatwa from Hajji Mirza Hassan Shirazi, forces

the Shah to rescind the Concession.

1896 Nasiruddin Shah of Persia is assassinated. Death of Jamaluddin Afghani, pan Islamic activist.

1901 Abdul Aziz ibn Saud captures Riyadh.

All India Muslim League is founded.

Death of Muzaffaruddin Shah of Persia. His son Muhammed Ali Mirza becomes the Shah. The first Majlis is elected in Persia.

The Young Turks Movement in Turkey gathers momentum.

Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina. Constitutional revolution in Persia. Muhammed Ali Shah of Persia is deposed. His young son Ahmed Mirza becomes the Shah.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II is deposed by the Young Turks. Mehmet V becomes the Sultan.

1911 The Sanusi brotherhood resists the Italian invasion of Libya.

1912 Muhammadiya movement is organized in Indonesia. Egypt becomes a British protectorate.

1913 The Balkan war begins. Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria invade Ottoman territories. Albania becomes independent. The Ottomans are forced to withdraw from most of the Balkans.

1914 A Serb in Sarajevo murders Prince Francis Ferdinand of Austria. Austria declares war on Serbia.

Russia declares war on Austria.

Germany declares war on Russia.

France and England declare war on Germany.

The Triple Entente powers (Britain, France and Russia) declare war on the Ottomans.

Beginning of World War I.

1915 The Ottomans contain British advances in Iraq and beat back attempts to capture Baghdad and Istanbul.

1916 The British promise to set up a unified Arab state.

Sharif Hussain declares himself king of Hejaz, attacks Ottoman garrisons in Arabia.

Lawrence of Arabia, a British intelligence officer, works with the Arabs. The Sykes-Picot agreement divides up the Ottoman territories between England, France, Russia, Greece and Italy.

1917 Anglo Indian troops under Allenby capture Baghdad and Jerusalem. The Balfour Declaration promises to set up a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The French take Beirut.

Germany releases the Bolshevik leader Lenin to pressure Russia to drop out of the War. The United States enters the War.

The Russian army begins to collapse on the western front. The October Revolution brings the Bolsheviks to power. Russia pulls out of the War.

1918 Mehmet VI becomes Ottoman Sultan. Damascus falls to British Forces.

Germany and the Ottoman Empire capitulate. End of World War I. The Wafd movement starts in Egypt.

1919 The victorious allies partition the Ottoman Empire. Greece invades Anatolia.

1920 French mandate over Syria. British mandate over Iraq and Palestine.

The Greeks capture Alashehir, Bahkesir, Bandarma and Bursa. The Turks stop the Greeks at the Battle of Ankara.

1921 The British appoint Abdullah, son of Sharif Hussain, as emir of Trans Jordan.

Faisal, another son of Hussain, is appointed emir of Iraq. The Turks are victorious over the Greeks at the Battle of the Sakarya River. Greece retreats from Anatolia.

1922 Abdul Mecit II becomes Ottoman Sultan.

Mustafa Kemal becomes President of the Republic of Turkey.

1924 The Turkish National Assembly abolishes the Caliphate

# CALIPHS AND IMAMS OF ISLAM

## **Khulfa e Rashidoon**

Abu Bakr As Siddiq (632-634)

Omar Ibn al Khattab (634-644)

Uthman ibn Affan (644-656)

Ali ibn Abu Talib (656-661)

## **The Ithna Ashari Imams**

Ali ibn Abu Talib (656-661)

Hassan ibn Ali (661-669)

Hussain ibn Ali (669-680)

Zain ul Abedin (680-712)

Al Baqir (712-731)

Ja'afar as Saadiq (731-765)

Musa al Kazim (765-799)

Ali al Rida (799-818)

Al Jawad (818-835)

Al Hadi (835-868)

Al Askari (868-874)

Al Muntazar (874-878)

## **The Fatimid Imams**

Ali ibn Abu Talib (656-661)

Hassan ibn Ali (661-669)

Hussain ibn Ali (669-680)

Zain ul Abedin (680-712)

Al Baqir (712-731)

Ja'afar as Saadiq (731-765)

Ismail (760)

### **The Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus**

Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan (661-680)

Yazid (680-683)

Muawiya II (683-684)

Marwan I (684-685)

Abdul Malik (685-705)

Al Walid I (705-715)

Suleyman (715-717)

Omar bin Abdul Azeez (717-720)

Yazid II (720-724)

Hisham (724-743)

Al Walid II (743-744)

Yazid III (744)

Ibrahim (744)

Marwan II (744-750)

### **The Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad**

Al Saffah (750-754)  
Al Mansur (754-775)  
Al Mahdi (775-785)  
Al Hadi (785-786)  
Harun Ar Rashid (786-809)  
Al Amin (809-813)  
Al Mamun (813-833)  
Al Mu'tasim (833-842)  
Al Wathiq (842-847)  
Al Mutawakkil (847-861)  
Al Musta'in (862-866)  
Al Mu'taz (866-869)  
Al Muhtadi (869-870)  
Al Mu'tamid (870-892)  
Al Mu'tadid (892-902)  
Al Muktafi (902-908)  
Al Muqtadir (908-932)  
Al Qahir (932-934)  
Al Radi (934-940)  
Al Muttaqi (940-944)  
Al Mustakfi (944-946)  
Al Muti' (946-974)  
Al Ta'i (974-991)  
Al Qadir (991-1031)  
Al Qa'im (1031-1075)  
Al Muqtadi (1075-1094)

Al Mustazhir (1094-1118)  
Al Mustarshid (1118-1135)  
Al Rashid (1135-1136)  
Al Muqtafi (1136-1160)  
Al Mustanjid (1160-1170)  
Al Mustadi' (1170-1180)  
Al Nasir (1180-1225)  
Al Zahir (1226-1242)  
Al Mustansir (1226-1242)  
Al Musta'sim (1242-1258)

### **The Ottoman Caliphs of Istanbul**

Selim I (1517-1520)  
Suleyman I (1520-1566)  
Selim II (1566-1574)  
Murad III (1574-1595)  
Mehmet III (1595-1603)  
Ahmet I (1603-1617)  
Mustafa I (1617-1618)  
Osman II (1618-1622)  
Mustafa I (1622-1623)  
Murad IV (1623-1640)  
Ibrahim (1640-1648)  
Mehmet IV (1648-1687)  
Suleyman II (1687-1691)  
Ahmed II (1691-1695)

Mustafa II (1695-1703)  
Ahmed III (1703-1730)  
Mahmut I (1730-1754)  
Osman III (1754-1757)  
Mustafa III (1757-74)  
Abul Hamid I (1774-1789)  
Selim III (1789-1807)  
Mustafa IV (1807-1808)  
Mehmet II (1808-1839)  
Abdulmecit I (1839-1861)  
Abdul Aziz (1861-1876)  
Murad IV (1876)  
Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909)  
Mehmet Reshat (1909-1918)  
Mehmet VI Vaheeduddin (1918-1922)  
Abdulmecit II (1922-1923)

## GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS

(Note: The glossary is common to Volumes I and II)

Arabic, Farsi and Urdu words are subtle and carry different shades of meaning, depending on their context and usage. We have offered here only a meaning consistent with the use of the word in this book.

Many of the Arabic words are used, with some modification or accent, in all languages spoken by Muslims.

Adhan (Arabic), call to prayer.



Adl (Arabic), justice.

Ahadith (Arabic), plural of Hadith; confirmed sayings of Prophet Muhammed.

Ahl al Bait (Arabic), the family of the Prophet; a term usually reserved for Ali ibn Abu Talib, Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and their children Hassan and Hussain; referred to as Ahl e Bait in Farsi, Turkish, Urdu.

Ak Kuyunlu (Turkish), white sheep; the name of a Turkish tribe.

Akhbari (Arabic), a process in the Shi'a schools of Fiqh, which emphasizes the primacy of textual authenticity over methodology and principles (cf. Usooli).

Alavi (Arabic), descendants/followers of Ali ibn Abu Talib; a comprehensive term that refers to Muslims who follow the Shi'a tenets.

Alim (Arabic), a scholar.

Ammah (Arabic), the general population; the common folk.

Andalus (Arabic, Andalusia in Spanish), the Spanish peninsula.

Ansar (Arabic), residents of Madina at the time of the Prophet's Hijra (migration from Mecca to Madina).

Asabiyah (Arabic), primal cohesiveness based on kinship; a term used by Ibn Khaldun to connote tribal and racial cohesiveness.

Asharite, the doctrines of Ali Abu Musa al Ashari, a 9th century scholar; the "atomistic theory" of time under which time flows in discrete steps and the Will of God intervenes at every moment to determine the outcome of an event.

Ayah (Arabic), a verse from the Qur'an; Ayat in Farsi and Urdu.

Awliya, (Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), plural of wali; sages; protectors; friends of God; great sufis.

Awqaf (Turkish, Urdu), plural of Waqf; religious endowments.

Ayurvedic, (Sanskrit), a system of medicine from India.

Bahadoor (Tatar, Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), a brave man; an honorific title.

Bahar (Farsi, Urdu), Season of spring.

Baiyah (Arabic), pronounced Baiyat in Farsi and Urdu; oath of allegiance to a Caliph, Imam or Shaykh.

Bani Hashim (Arabic), the Hashimite tribe to which Prophet Muhammed and Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib belonged.

Banu Umayyah (Arabic), the Umayyad tribe to which Caliph Uthman bin Affan and Emir Muawiya belonged.

Baraka (Arabic), increase; blessing; in common language, the baraka of good deed, or the baraka from a visit to the tomb of a shaykh; pronounced as barkat in Farsi and Urdu.

Batini (Farsi, Urdu), a school of thought, which accepts the view that one may conceal one's faith under conditions of extreme threat.

Beg (Turkish), pronounced Bayg, a governor.

Begler Beg (Turkish), Governor General, the governor of several provinces.

Begum, (Urdu), ladies of a royal household; princess; an honorific title.

Bida (Arabic), innovation in religion.

Bilalu Banuma (Mandinka), Bilal ibn Rabah, Companion of the Prophet.

Caliph (Khalifa in Arabic), the temporal and religious head of the Islamic community.

Caliphate (Khilafat in Arabic), a state headed by a Caliph; domain of a Caliph.

Dar al Islam (Arabic), the abode of Islam; in historic times, the regions where Muslim rule was prevalent.

Dar al Harab (Arabic), the abode of conflict; in historical times, the regions where Muslim rule was not prevalent.

Dayee (Arabic), a missionary.

Deccan (Urdu), the southern portion of India that jets into the Indian Ocean.

Deen al Fitra (Arabic), literally, the religion of pristine nature.

Deen e Ilahi (Farsi, Urdu), literally, the religion of God; a compendium of ethical standards compiled by Moghul Emperor Akbar in the 16th

century.

Dhikr (Arabic), pronounced zikr in Farsi and Urdu; remembrance of God; in sufi circles, continuous recitation of the Name of God.

Dhimanah (Arabic), protection; trust; pronounced zimanat in Farsi, Turkish and Urdu.

Dhimmi (Arabic), a protected people; pronounced zimmi in Urdu.

Divan (Urdu), Prime Minister.

Emir (Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a leader; also spelled Amir.

Emir ul Bahr (Arabic), admiral of the sea; the head of the naval forces.

Emir ul Momineen (Arabic), leader of the believers; a title for an emir who assumes the responsibility of protecting Muslims; a Caliph.

Fana (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), annihilation; in sufi terminology, the annihilation of the human soul as it immerses itself in Divine Love.

Faqh'i (Arabic), a scholar of Fiqh; a judge.

Farman (Farsi, Urdu), a royal decree; a pronouncement.

Farsh (Farsi, Urdu), a carpet; a floor; the earth.

Farsi, the Persian language.

Fatimid, the dynasty that ruled Egypt and North Africa in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries; a follower of the Shi'a branch of Islam which believes in six Imams, the last of whom was Imam Ismail.

Fatwa (Arabic), a legal ruling by a qualified scholar.

Fidayee (Arabic), one who sacrifices himself; a martyr.

Fiqh (Arabic), jurisprudence; a rigorous and precise application of the Shariah to religious, social, political and economic issues.

Firangi (Urdu), from the word Frank; a person of European origin; in common usage it is a derogatory word.

Fitnat ul Kabir (Arabic), the Great Schism; the Shi'a-Sunni split that surfaced after the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman bin Affan.

Fuqaha'a (Arabic), Plural of Faqh'i; scholars of Fiqh.

Fustat, old name for the city of Cairo, Egypt.

Ghazal (Arabic, Urdu, Turkish), a love lyric, usually sung to the accompaniment of music.

Ghazi (Arabic), one who engages in Ghazza.

Ghazza (Arabic), to engage in armed struggle for the sake of faith.

Guru (Sanskrit), a teacher; a holy man.

Hadith (Arabic), verified and authenticated sayings of Prophet Muhammed.

Hafiz e Qur'an (Farsi, Urdu), one who has committed the entire Qur'an to memory.

Hajib (Arabic), a person responsible for keeping the Caliph separated (and sometimes concealed) from the common folk.

Hajj (Arabic), pilgrimage to Mecca, one of five pillars of Islam.

Hajji (Arabic), a pilgrim.

Hakam (Arabic), arbitration.

Hakim (Arabic), a person endowed with wisdom; a person who takes a holistic and integrative approach to learning.

Halal (Arabic), acceptable; sanctioned by Law.

Halqa (Arabic), a study circle.

Hamd (Arabic), a recitation in praise of God.

Hanafi, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Abu Haneefa.

Hanbali, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal.

Haram (Arabic), a sanctuary; a term applied only to the sanctuaries in Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem.

Hashashin (Arabic), assassin.

Hejaz, the western portions of the Arabian Peninsula where the cities of Mecca and Madina are located.

Hijab (Arabic), to hide; to conceal; to cover.

Hijra (Arabic), the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Madina in the year 622. It marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Hindustan (Hindi, Urdu), the peninsula in South Asia which contains the modern nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; also called Hind.

Hufaz (Arabic), plural of Hafiz.

Hujjah (Arabic), argument; disputation.

Ich Oghlans (Turkish), slaves in the Ottoman court.

Ihram (Arabic), a piece of unsown cloth worn by men during hajj.

Ihsan (Arabic), noble deed; commendable action.

Ijazah (Arabic), diploma; permission; pronounced ijazat in Farsi and Urdu.

Ijma (Arabic), consensus; a term used in jurisprudence to mean consensus of the Companions of the Prophet.

Ijtihad (Arabic), a legal process which allows a qualified scholar the latitude to apply independent judgment on an issue using rigorous and precise applications of the Shariah.

Ilm (Arabic), knowledge.

Ilm al Yaqeen (Arabic), knowledge with certainty, used in sufi circles for esoteric knowledge about the soul and its relationship to God.

Imam (Arabic), the religious and temporal leader of the Islamic community; the Imams in the lineage of Ali ibn Abu Talib; in general usage, a religious leader.

Imamate, the collective body politic of Muslims headed by an Imam.

Iman (Arabic), belief; faith.

Injil (Arabic), the Book revealed to Prophet Jesus.

Istihsan (Arabic), a legal process that allows the latitude of independent judgment within the canonical bounds of the Shariah.

Ithna Ashari (Arabic), Muslims who believe in Twelve Imams (cf. Saba'ee), the main branch among Shi'a Muslims.

Ja'afariya, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq.

Jagir (Hindi, Urdu), a hereditary land grant from a king.

Jami Masjid (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), the principal mosque in a town; also pronounced Jamia Masjid.

Janissars (Turkish, Urdu), literally, those who are willing to sacrifice their lives; the elite corps in the Ottoman infantry.

Jazira (Arabic), an island; the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Mesopotamia.

Jizya (Arabic), a tax paid by non-Muslims for exemption from serving in the armed forces of an Islamic state.

Jihad (Arabic), struggle.

Jihad al Akbar (Arabic), the greater jihad, against one's own evil inclinations; to cultivate the qualities of selfless service and moral rectitude.

Jihad as Sagheer (Arabic), the lesser jihad, against oppression and for self-defense.

Juma'a (Arabic), the obligatory Friday congregational prayer.

Ka'ba (Arabic), the sanctuary in Mecca, cubic in shape, first constructed by Prophet Abraham. It establishes the direction of prayer for Muslims throughout the world.

Kadi (Arabic), a judge; pronounced kazi in Farsi, Turkish, Urdu.

Kafir (Arabic), one who conceals the truth, hence an unbeliever; sometimes spelled as kaffir.

Ka-khan (Mongolian), the Great Khan.

Kalam (Arabic), the sciences of the Qur'an; discourse; conversation.

Karavansarai (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a place of rest for travelers.

Khadive (Turkish), Viceroy; Governor of Egypt.

Khan (Mongol, Tatar, Pushtu), a deputy; an honorific title.

Kamarband (Hindi, Urdu), a waist belt, usually studded with precious stones.

Kara Kuyunlu (Turkish), black sheep; the name of a Turkish tribe.

Karbala, a city in Iraq where Imam Hussain suffered his martyrdom. As an adjective it connotes extreme suffering and sacrifice in almost all languages spoken by Muslims.

Katib (Arabic), a scribe; usually, a scribe who copies the Qur'an.

Khan-Khanan (Mongolian), Prime Minister.

Khatib (Arabic), a scholar who gives the khutba (lecture) during Friday congregational prayers.

Kharijite, literally, those who walked away; a splinter group in the early history of Islam; a group with extreme views; a group responsible for the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Khulfa e Rashidoon (Arabic), the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs: Abu Bakr as Siddiq, Omar ibn al Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abu Talib. The Sunnis believe in the Caliphate of the first four Caliphs.

Khutba (Arabic), the lecture given during the Friday congregational prayers.

Kitab (Arabic), a book.

Kotwal (Urdu), Mayor of a city during the Moghul period.

Ma'arifah (Arabic), knowledge; usually, knowledge of Divine love; pronounced Ma'arifat in Farsi and Urdu.

Madrasah (Arabic), school.

Maghrib (Arabic), the West; the North African states of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Tunisia. Before 1492, it also included Spain.

Maghrib al Aqsa (Arabic), the farthest western frontier, Morocco.

Mahal (Farsi, Urdu, Hindi), palace.

Malakat (Arabic), ownership.

Malakut (Arabic), market place.

Maliki (Arabic), a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Malik bin Anas.

Mallam (Fulani), religious teacher.

Mansab (Urdu), a land grant.

Mansabdar (Urdu), the owner of a mansab; in return for the mansab, he provided troops to the crown in times of war and collected taxes in times of peace.

Marabout (Hausa-Fulani), a religious teacher; a dervish; a sufi.

Maristan (Arabic), hospital.

Mausam (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), climate, weather.

Mazhab (Arabic), a school of Fiqh; rigid adherence to a specific school of Fiqh.

Mehna (Arabic), persecution; inquisition.

Minjenique (Arabic), a mechanical catapult, perfected by Muslims to throw large payloads at a fortress; an assault engine.

Momin (Arabic), a believer.

Moor, from Latin, a person from Mauritania; a black person; a general term used by the Europeans for Muslims, especially the Muslims of Spain and Portugal.

Muezzin (Arabic), the person who chants the adhan (call to prayer).

Muhabbah (Arabic), love; divine Love, as used in sufi circles; pronounced Muhabbat in Farsi, Urdu.

Muhaddith (Arabic), a scholar of the sciences of hadith.

Muhajir (Arabic), Meccans who migrated to Madina in 622 along with the Prophet.

Mujaddid (Arabic), literally, one who makes things modern; a reformer.

Mujahid (Arabic), one who engages in a struggle, usually against oppression; plural, mujahideen.

Mullah (Arabic), a local religious leader.

Murid (Arabic), in sufi circles, one who desires knowledge; a follower of a murshad.

Murshad (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a spiritual person; a sufi Shaykh.

Mu'tazilite, a philosopher; a rationalist; a follower of the Greek approach to knowledge.



Naat (Urdu), a poem in praise of Prophet Muhammed.

Nafs (Arabic), soul.

Nawab (Urdu, Hindi), a deputy; a governor; corrupted into nabob in English.

Nizam (Urdu), a deputy; a cabinet minister; hereditary title of the Nizams of Hyderabad, India.

PadiShah (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), ruler; king; sometimes, shortened into Pasha; also called badaShah in Farsi, Urdu.

Pargana (Hindi), a county or district.

Pir (Farsi, Urdu), in sufi circles, a teacher; a person with spiritual qualities.

Qanun (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), law; principles of law; canons of law.

Qawwal (Urdu), a reciter of qawwali; a singer of mystic poetry.

Qisas (Arabic), equitable retribution in cases of assassination and murder.

Qiyas (Arabic), a rigorous and precise application of the principles of jurisprudence by a qualified judge to a specific issue; to ponder; to think.

Qur'an (Arabic), revelation; the Koran; the Book revealed to Prophet Muhammed.

Qutub (Arabic), pole; tower; lighthouse; in sufi terminology, the shaykh who provides a focus for spiritual teachings.

Rafeeq (Arabic), an uninitiated recruit among the assassins of the 11th century.

Raga (Sanskrit), a musical scale; a composition.

Rehla (Arabic), travelogue.

Risala (Urdu), a regiment of troops.

Risalah (Arabic), a newspaper.

Ruh (Arabic), the spirit.

Rumilia (Turkish), an Ottoman province in the Balkans.

Saba'ee (Arabic), Muslims who believe in seven Imams (cf. Ithna Ashari); a branch among Shi'a Muslims.

Sadr (Farsi), head; a religious head.

Sahel (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), the coast; the Coast of the Horn of Africa.

Sahih (Arabic), authenticated, verified, confirmed, as in Sahih Hadith.

Sajda (Arabic), touching the forehead to the ground before God; prostration.

Salat (Arabic), the obligatory prayer. Muslims are enjoined to pray five times a day. The men, if they can, are required to pray in congregation.

Sama'a (Arabic), a music recital by sufis, sometimes accompanied by ecstatic dancing.

Sanjak (Turkish), district.

Sanjakbey (Turkish), district administrator.

Sarkar (Farsi, Urdu), government; an administrative district.

Seerah (Arabic), path; example; the example of Prophet Muhammed; pronounced as seerat in Farsi, Urdu.

Shafi'i (Arabic), a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Shafi'i.

Shahada (Arabic), to bear witness; to be conscious; to recognize; to sacrifice; to recite the articles of faith.

Shariah (Arabic), the Divine Law as enjoined by the Qur'an.

Shaykh (Arabic), a learned man; a title of respect and honor.

Shi'a (Arabic), Muslims who believe that the legacy of the Prophet resides exclusively with the Ahl al Bait (family of the Prophet). The Shi'as believe that Ali ibn Abu Talib was the first Imam and Caliph of the Islamic community; also spelled Shia.

Shi'Aan e Ali (Farsi), the party of Ali ibn Abu Talib; also called Shi'at Ali.

Shura (Arabic), consultations.

Siasat (Farsi, Urdu), politics.

Silsilah (Arabic), a chain of transmission of knowledge.

Sipahi (Turkish, Urdu), a soldier.

Suba (Farsi, Urdu), a province.

Subedar (Urdu), the governor of a province.

Sufi (Arabic), a person who cultivates tasawwuf; a mystic; a person endowed with spiritual knowledge.

Suhaba (Arabic), the Companions of the Prophet Muhammed; also pronounced as Sahaba.

Su-ka-ra (Sanskrit), a sweet substance; root word for sugar.

Sultan (Arabic), king; emperor; sovereign; authority.

Sultanate, kingdom.

Sunnah (Arabic), example; usage is reserved for the example of Prophet Muhammed, although it is sometimes applied to the Sunnah of the Companions of the Prophet.

Sunni (Arabic), Muslims who believe that legitimacy of rule is established by a consensus of the community. The Sunnis believe in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr as Siddiq, Omar ibn al Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Tabiyeen (Arabic), those who learned from the Companions; the second generation of Muslims after the Prophet.

Talbiyah (Arabic), harkening to the call of God, recited during Hajj.

Taluk (Hindi), county.

Talukdar (Hindi), county official.

Tanzeemat (Turkish, Urdu, Farsi), plural of Tanzeem; organization and discipline; a set of reforms in the Ottoman Empire in the 19 th century.

Taqiyya (Arabic), a principle that allows concealment of faith when faced with grave danger.

Taqlid (Arabic), to copy; to blindly follow a legal school.

Tareeqah (Arabic), methodology; in sufi circles, the methodology for acquiring spiritual knowledge; a sufi order.

Tasawwuf (Arabic), the science of purification of one's own soul; the spiritual dimension of Islam.

Taurat (Arabic), the Torah, the Book revealed to Prophet Musa (Moses).

Tawhid (Arabic), at the most elementary level, it means belief in one God; as a comprehensive term, it means a God focused civilization.

Ulema (Arabic), plural of Alim; scholars.

Ummah (Arabic), the collective body of Muslims; the followers of each Prophet are also called an ummah, for instance, the ummah of Prophet Moses or the ummah of Prophet Jesus.

Ummul Momineen (Arabic), Mother of believers, a term reserved for the wives of Prophet Muhammed.

Urdu, a language spoken in the India-Pakistan subcontinent.

Usooli (Arabic), a process in the Shi'a schools of Fiqh which emphasizes methodology and principle over textual authenticity.

Uthmanali, Ottoman.

Vizier (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), Prime Minister; the chief executive functionary.

Wadu (Arabic), washing of hands, face and feet before prayer; ablution; purification of the body, also pronounced as wudu.

Wahdat al Wajud (Arabic), Unity of Existence; a doctrine of tasawwuf.

Wahdat as Shahada (Arabic), Unity of Witness; a doctrine of tasawwuf.

Wahhabi (Arabic), a puritan; a follower of Shaykh Abdul Wahhab.

Wali (Arabic), guardian; protector; a sufi shaykh.

Waqf (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), a religious endowment.

Wilayat (Farsi, Urdu), a community of believers under the guardianship of a qualified Imam.

Yawm e Ashoora (Farsi), 10th day of the month of Muharram; a day of mourning, especially among Shi'as.

Zahiri (Farsi), a school of thought, which prescribes that belief and action should be open and consistent with each other.

Zaidi, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Zaid; one who believes in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali but not of Uthman.

Zakat (Arabic), obligatory charity as sanctioned by the Qur'an, in general calculated at 2.5 percent of the surplus wealth; one of the five pillars of Islam.

Zamindar (Urdu, Hindi), a landlord.

Zanjir (Farsi, Urdu), shackles; a rope; derived from Zanj, a place near Zanzibar in East Africa from where a large number of workers were brought to Iraq in the 9th century.

Zawiya (Arabic), a sufi place of congregation used for dhikr as well as for community activities and social service.

Ziyara (Arabic), an offering, usually monetary, made to a shaykh, pronounced ziyarat in Farsi and Urdu.

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